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SERMONS,

PREACHED

ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS,

BY

ROBERT CHALMERS,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

AT HADDINGTON.

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.—JER. xxiii. 28.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.—ROM. i. 16.

Christ is all, and in all.—COL. iii. 11.

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THE Writer of the following Sermons felt no great inclination to appear in print. To say that he is destitute of vanity, would be to pretend, that he is better than other men are, and that he is much better than himself really is. But he can with truth declare, that the principal motive which induced him to send forth this publication, was a desire to gratify the wishes of a number of his own congregation,—for the members of which, he hopes, he shall ever entertain the greatest affection and regard. That the perusal of it may be conducive, through the Divine blessing, to their further edification and comfort, and to the best interests of others, into whose hands it may come, is the desire of his heart, and his prayer to God.

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SERMONS, &c.

SERMON I.

CONTEMPT OF THE GOSPEL WILL BE AT-
TENDED WITH PERDITION.

1 COR. i. 18.

*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish
foolishness.*

THOUGH the gospel is the same in itself unto all the hearers of it, yet it is not the same in the opinions of all, nor in the effects which it has upon them. To some it is very precious, and, of consequence, they have a high esteem of it. It is to them a *joyful sound*, and they are disposed to bless the Lord, that ever it was their privilege to hear it, and to *know it*. But it is quite otherwise with many to whom also it is preached. They have never beheld any excellency in it. Instead of this, to them it appears to be an absurd and irrational system of doctrine. It contains truths, which they will not believe, and which they cannot esteem, because they reckon them foolish and unreasonable. We need not be surpris'd, that there should still be persons of this disposition in the church, considering that the

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apostles

apostles themselves had to weep over many, who were the *enemies of the cross of Christ*. The condition of such is indeed truly affecting; because, by their contempt of the gospel, and their enmity against the cross, they expose themselves to certain destruction, according to this text; *The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.*

Corinth, a Grecian city, was a place noted for its great wealth and politeness, and not less remarkable for its wickedness. The Apostle Paul had been instrumental in planting the church of Christ there, as we read in Acts xviii.; and as he intimates in chap. iii. 5, 6. of this epistle. When he first began to preach Christ there, he met with great opposition. When he testified to the Jews, that Jesus was Christ, they opposed themselves and blasphemed. His labours were, however, crowned with great success: for we find, that Crispus, the chief ruler of the Jewish synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized. And, further to encourage the apostle to perseverance in the work of the gospel, the Lord spake to him, by a vision, and cautioning him against the fear of man, assured him of his gracious presence, of all necessary protection, and of eminent success; for, said he, *I have much people in this city.*

Agreeably to these good and comfortable words, a numerous and thriving church was gathered there, by means of Paul's ministry. But, some time after his departure, a variety of abuses crept into it, which it is his design, in this epistle, to correct.

In the verse which immediately precedes the text, he represents the work which he was chiefly called to, and employed in: *Christ, says he, sent me not to baptize,*

baptize, but to preach the gospel. He does not mean absolutely, that he was not sent to baptize; for this was a part of the apostolical and ministerial work, Matth. xxviii. 19. But he means, that *preaching the gospel* was, in many respects, the most important of the two. It was of the highest importance, to convert sinners, *to turn them from darkness to light*, to remove their prejudices in behalf of those idolatrous forms of religion which they were taught to revere and practise, and to incline them *to serve the living God*, according to his own word. When once their minds were opened to receive the truths of the gospel, they would most readily submit to every ordinance of Christ's appointment. It would therefore appear, that Paul left the dispensation of the ordinance of baptism to some of his brethren, while he gave himself more especially to the ministry of the word. The preaching of the gospel is the main part of the ministerial work, because, by means of it principally, men are converted to the faith of Christ, and are thus prepared for partaking of the rest of his ordinances. *For, Christ sent me not to baptize*; as if the apostle had said, To baptize is not my only work, nor yet the chief or most important part of it; *but to preach the gospel.*

He next represents the *manner* in which he was authorized to preach the gospel; *Not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.* He did not deliver the message of his divine Master in florid language, as if he had affected the decorations of fine style and composition, which might be in vogue in that day. He did not deal in philosophical niceties, nor in oratorical declamations, that he might thereby tickle the fancies, and please

the corrupt taste of his hearers, without informing their understandings, and impressing their consciences, by telling them plain truths. He gives a good reason for this; *lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect*. Had the apostle studied to ornament the gospel by any finery of language, the Lord might have been provoked to blast it to the hearers; or, if it should be made effectual to the benefit of any, some might be in danger of ascribing its success to the power of human eloquence, and not to the force of truth, or to any supernatural efficacy of the gospel itself.

In this eighteenth verse, the apostle presents us with a *mournful account* of the opinions of some concerning the gospel, and a *pleasant and comfortable account* of the blessed effects of the gospel upon others.

The first of these we have in the words which contain the subject of this discourse: *The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness*. Here we may observe,

1. What the apostle speaks of. *The preaching of the cross*. It is the *cross of Christ* which is here meant, or, the doctrine of *Christ crucified*; as it is expressed in chap. ii. 2. To all of you it will be obvious, that it is not to be understood of the material cross, on which our Lord suffered; as if the apostle had taught, or intended to teach, that there was any virtue or efficacy in that particular tree or piece of wood, more than in any other tree of the forest. To imagine this, and to pay any sort of religious respect to the cross, or to the picture of it, as some do, is a piece of senseless, as well as sinful, idolatry. But by *the cross* here, the apostle means the whole of Christ's *obedience unto death*,—the whole of his mediatory service

service and sufferings, which were completed upon the cross; for there, *he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.* The preaching of the cross is just the preaching of Christ's complete atonement and satisfaction for sin, or, of his perfect righteousness, as the only ground of a sinner's salvation. And thus it is the very same, which the apostle calls *preaching the gospel*, in the preceding verse. To *preach the gospel*, is to *preach the cross*, or a free and full salvation through the cross of Christ.

2. What this is said to be, in the opinion of some who hear it; *foolishness.* They look on it as a foolish and absurd doctrine. Careless sinners reckon the doctrine of the cross useless, as if there were no need for such atonement and righteousness, as that which our Lord completed on the cross. Many of them reject it as irrational. They spurn at the idea of mens restoration to the favour of God, on any such account. Thus, viewing it as foolishness, they pay no attention to it,—they despise and oppose it.

3. To whom it is foolishness: *To them that perish.* This is indeed a very dreadful and alarming account of such persons. It is expressive of their great sin and danger. The words may be read, *them that are destroyed**. By their unbelief and contempt of the gospel of Christ, they are guilty of *destroying themselves.* They wrong their own souls. They perish,—they are presently in a perishing condition, *without God, and having no hope in the world.* And if the preaching of the cross continue finally to be accounted of and treated by them, as *foolishness*, they must *perish for ever.* 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. *The Lord himself shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, ta-*

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* Τοις ἀπολλυμένοις.

king vengeance on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction. The conduct, therefore, of the enemies of the cross of Christ is not to be imitated, nor their condition to be envied by us; for, *if the gospel be bid, it is bid to them that are lost.*

In discoursing further upon the subject, we shall,

- I. Make some observations concerning *the preaching of the cross*;
- II. Consider what it is here said to be, as to some men,—*foolishness*;
- III. Take a view of the sad account given of these persons, by the manner in which they are here characterized,—*them that perish*; and then add a few inferences.

I. We are to make some observations concerning *the preaching of the cross*.

To preach the cross is, in general, to preach the whole gospel. We have already observed, that the apostle makes use of these phrases as equivalent. The gospel signifies *good news* and *joyful tidings*; but it is good news about the salvation of men, only through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Paul *gloried in the cross*, as the only way to that crown of life which he expected, Gal. vi. 14. All Scripture-doctrine is to be preached with reference unto the cross,—the complete atonement and righteousness of Christ. The doctrine of our sin and misery; the doctrine about our faith and duty; the doctrine about Christ's person and offices; all doctrine about precepts, promises, and threatenings; and, in short, all the doctrines of Scripture, are to be preached, in the connection

connection they have with the cross of Christ.—We observe, more particularly,

1. That *preaching the cross* means a preaching the need of it, or, *the necessity* of that atonement and satisfaction, which our Lord finished by the death of the cross. The necessity of this satisfaction arises from man's guilty and condemned state by nature, and from this, that there is no salvation to be expected, without a full atonement for sin; for, *without shedding of blood is no remission*, Heb. ix. 22. The preaching of the cross, therefore, supposes the preaching of the Scripture-doctrine about the sinfulness and misery of that estate into which all men are fallen. By the breach of the covenant of works, as well as by their personal transgressions, Adam and all his natural posterity are guilty in the sight of God. There is not one of the human race excepted from this charge. By the broken law *every mouth is stopped, and all the world is become guilty before God*. Having become guilty, they all necessarily fell under the penal sentence of the law, and stand condemned at God's bar. *By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation*. And sin is an evil of such infinite magnitude, that it is impossible that a holy and just God should overlook it, or should take sinners into his favour, unless satisfaction be made for it. *He will by no means clear the guilty*. But sinners themselves were absolutely unable to repair the breaches of the divine law with which they stood charged, or to make any satisfaction to the infinite justice of God. It was, therefore, necessary, that the divine Surety, in order to their salvation, should expiate their guilt upon the cross, by *the sacrifice of himself*, Heb. ix. 26.

2. That

2. That *preaching the cross* means a preaching the *infinite value and sufficiency* of the cross of Christ, or of *His obedience unto death*, which he completed upon his cross. Though nothing that men could either do or suffer was able to make any satisfaction for their sins, or to merit acceptance and salvation for them, yet the service and sufferings of the Mediator were every way satisfactory and meritorious. The death of the legal sacrifices could not appease the incensed Judge; but, in the death of *Christ, our pass-over sacrificed for us*, he found infinite satisfaction. Heb. x. 4. 14. *It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins: But by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

The infinite value of the cross of Christ appears from considering the glory of his person, as the true God. Though he appeared in human nature, having a reasonable soul, and a body composed of flesh and blood, like the children of men; yet it was not a mere creature that bled and died upon the cross, but the eternal God, *over all blessed for ever*. His blood was the *blood of God*. It is true, his human nature alone was capable of suffering; but what he suffered in that nature was really the suffering of his person, because that nature subsisted, and never but did subsist, in the person of the Son of God. A God of infinite justice and holiness, met with his *fellow and equal*, in the person of our suffering, our dying, Surety; and therefore, his sufferings must have been infinitely satisfactory. Every pang he endured, and every groan he uttered, had a matchless value in it. This was abundantly testified by his triumphant resurrection and ascension into heaven, as is intimated in Phil. ii. 8, 9. *He became obedient*

dient unto death, even the death of the cross: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. We are, therefore, to preach the infinite value and sufficiency of the cross of Christ, as the meritorious ground of salvation; and to certify guilty men, that they can run no hazard, in venturing their souls for eternity upon it; for *Jehovah is well pleased for his righteousness sake*, Isa. xlii. 21.

3. That *preaching the cross* means a preaching it for all those ends for which Christ endured it. An apostle says, Heb. xii. 2. that *Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross*. The joy set before him was, not only the glory which was to redound to Jehovah, and the glory and honour, with which he himself was to be crowned, as IMMANUEL, God in our nature; but also the blessedness which would flow to guilty perishing sinners from his cross. The ends for which a person of such dignity *endured the cross*, must have been great and important. And, if his cross is to be preached among men, by God's express command, it must be to serve great purposes, and that special benefits may thereby be obtained. Accordingly, we observe,

1st, That the cross of Christ is to be preached to sinners, as *the ground of their peace and reconciliation with God*. All men have forfeited peace with God, and have incurred his high displeasure. His *wrath is revealed from heaven*, in awful threatenings against them,—threatenings, which are not arbitrary or accidental, but which flow necessarily from the infinite purity, justice, and veracity of his nature, as offended by sinners. But Christ is the great *peace-maker*. In his sufferings unto death, he was a true peace-offering,—an offering for purchasing peace with

with God. Hence are the words of the apostle, Col. i. 20. *Having made peace by the blood of his cross.* Through his mediation, God is revealing himself to sinners, as *the God of peace*. What an amiable and acceptable designation of the Holy One is that of *the God of peace!* *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is through the merit and efficacy of his cross, that rebellious sinners come to be at peace with God. *They are reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* We preach the cross, therefore, as the only way in which you can obtain peace with an offended God. And you are sure of obtaining it in this way: Witness his own gracious declaration, Isa. xxvii. 5. *Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.*

2dly, The cross of Christ is preached, for pardon of sin, and acceptance with God. The peace of God takes immediate effect in blotting out iniquity for his name's sake. When, as *the God of peace*, he speaks to the awakened soul, it is in such words as these, Ezek. xvi. 63. *I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* Isa. xlv. 22. *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and, as a cloud, thy sins.* But this blotting out of transgressions is a fruit of the cross. It cannot take place, but upon the ground of a full and adequate atonement, which is found only in *the blood of the cross*. *He is the propitiation for our sins; and we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* It is in the cross of Christ only, that God is to be met with as a sin-pardoning God. We dare not tell men, *that they must be and do this and that other good thing, in order to obtain the pardon*

of

of their sins; but are bound, under the pain of a curse, to proclaim a free forgiveness through the cross,—to direct sinners to the great atoning sacrifice, which Christ offered up, as the only ground of pardon. *Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins*, saith an apostle. And the sinner, who, by faith, flies to the blood of the cross, not only obtains the pardon of all his trespasses, but his person is taken into favour with God, and he stands high in the divine acceptance. *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.*

3dly, The cross of Christ is preached, for sanctification, or true holiness. Men are not only guilty, but vile, and therefore they need holiness, as well as pardon. Both of these spring meritoriously from the cross of Christ. Tit. ii. 14. *Jesus Christ—gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* The way for communicating sanctifying grace to sinners, was shut up by the law-curse; and it could be opened only by the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Through his cross God is graciously inclined to bestow, and actually does bestow, renewing and sanctifying grace. *By the will of God we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Christ once for all*, Heb. x. 10. Holiness of nature and life is not to be preached, as the ground of justification, but as a necessary fruit of it. All who are pardoned are also made holy; and both of these privileges are necessary and inseparable parts of that great salvation, which Christ purchased upon the cross. It is in vain that sinners attempt to make themselves morally clean, if they apply not to the

the fountain of Christ's blood. This, and this alone, *cleanseth us from all sin*. None can be sanctified efficaciously by the grace of Christ, but as justified meritoriously by his blood. We must, therefore, look to his cross for true holiness. To obtain this for us, was one of the great ends he had in view, in becoming obedient unto death. Heb. xiii. 12. *Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

4thly, The cross of Christ is to be *preached*, for *victory over all enemies*. Many are the foes, under whose dreadful power and influence men naturally are. They are under the power of sin, which is represented as a mighty tyrant, exercising the most stubborn dominion over them, and reigning unto their endless ruin. *Sin hath reigned unto death*. The curse of the law is inimical to the sinner. If he be not delivered from it by the cross, it will infallibly take effect in his everlasting destruction. It is inexorable, and, without respect of persons, peremptorily says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*. The devil is a great adversary of souls. He has all natural men under his power; and, both by deceit and by violence, he keeps possession of their souls, leads them on in the way of sin, keeps them from the ways of God, and will, if mercy prevent not, be their eternal tormentor. The world is an enemy to the sinner, though he is not disposed to think so. It is naturally *set in his heart*, engrosses his affections, and excites him to undervalue *the things which are not seen, and are eternal*. Death is an enemy, not only as it dissolves the union between soul and body, but as it lands the guilty soul in a state of perdition.

Hell

Hell is an enemy. It waits for the man who is out of Christ, and is *moved for him, to meet him at his coming*. Now, it is an interesting question, How may a sinner obtain deliverance from, and victory over, all these dreadful foes? And the answer is, Through that very cross which is so much despised by *them that perish*. Jesus Christ was a conqueror in his cross. Col. ii. 15. *Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*. His satisfactory and meritorious sufferings made an end of the guilt of sin, and of the law-curse, which he endured *in his own body on the tree*. By this means he destroyed the power of Satan, and procured, for all his people, deliverance from death and hell. So that the person who flies to the cross, is sure of rescue from, and of complete triumph over, all these enemies, and may exult as the apostle and other saints did long ago, Rom. viii. 37. *In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.*

5thly, In fine, the cross of Christ is to be preached, as *the meritorious cause of eternal happiness in heaven*. Viewing men as sinners, under the curse of Jehovah, and as deserving everlasting perdition, there can for them be no prospect of eternal life. But as the cross of Jesus is productive of peace, of pardon, of holiness, and of deliverance from all spiritual enemies, so it is meritorious of happiness in the heavenly state. Hence the apostle declares, that Christ, *by his own blood, hath obtained eternal redemption for his people*, Heb. ix. 12. There is no access for men *into the holiest of all, but by the blood of Jesus*. Those people who dream of happiness in the world to come, and yet continue careless about

having a saving interest in Christ crucified, while they are on earth, greatly deceive themselves. If there be no way to heaven but one, and if that be only by the mediation of Jesus Christ, how sadly do those delude themselves, who spurn at the doctrine of *his* cross! They, in the language of the Holy Ghost, *judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life* Acts xiii. 46. Would men attain to the enjoyment of eternal happiness, they must look to *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. Heaven is the purchase of his blood, and is the gift of a gracious God to them, on his account, Rom. vi. 23. He suffered all penal evil upon the cross, that he might, in the most legal and glorious manner, bestow everlasting felicity upon his people. Their being made perfectly happy through eternity, is owing to *his being made perfect through sufferings*, Heb. ii. 10. and v. 9.

4. That *the preaching of the cross* means a doctrinal proclamation and exhibition of it, and of all benefit by it, unto sinners. It is not designed, merely to amuse mankind, or to fill their minds with vain and speculative notions. They are not to hear it, as they would hear an account of any historical fact, either read or repeated by others. The natural mind may be entertained with a piece of history, in which, however, the person is not at all individually interested. It is not enough, that people know about Christ, or about his death, as matters of fact. They may have tolerable notions of the history and nature of his life and death, and, after all, have no more benefit from these, than from the life and death of any mere man. Multitudes, in the days of Christ's humiliation, heard his sermons, and were witnesses of his miracles, of his sufferings, and

of his death, who still thereby reaped no saving advantage. But, when the cross of Christ is said to be preached, it means, that Christ crucified is set forth to sinners, as the grand ordinance of God for their salvation; so as that every person, in whose ears the doctrine is taught, and to whom the offer of him is made, may believe on him unto eternal life. The doctrine of the cross is to be considered by every person, as spoken to *him*, that it may be believed by *him*, and that *he* may rest the salvation of *his* soul upon the crucified Redeemer. To this purpose our Lord himself spake, John iii. 14, 15. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* The serpent in the wilderness, was not lifted up, merely to be gazed at, but to be *looked unto for healing*, as God's ordinance for that end. And every person, who was stung by the fiery serpents, must look to the serpent of brass *for himself*. So Christ, as held up to the view of sinners in the preaching of his cross, is to be received and rested upon by them. And, accordingly, we preach Christ crucified to you, not only that you may hear the doctrine, but that you may fly to him, by faith, for salvation; having this precious promise, that *whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* The end of preaching is entirely lost upon those persons, who do not reckon themselves concerned,—most particularly concerned,—in what they hear. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* The cross of Christ is preached to you all, for peace with God, for pardon, and for the other benefits before mentioned; so

that you may be addressed in the words which Paul long ago directed to the mixed worshippers in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

5. That *the preaching of the cross* is a divine institution. Hence the apostle speaks of it here, and in other parts of this chapter, as a part of the work unto which the apostles and other church-officers were called. In the preceding verse, he tells us, that *Christ sent him to preach the gospel*. Here he informs us, that the gospel is *the preaching of the cross*. Accordingly he adds, ver. 23. *We preach Christ crucified*. The preaching of the cross is one of those special institutions, which Christ hath appointed in his church, in New-testament days, to continue till his second coming. This appears from that commission given to the apostles, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. *All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth: Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them—And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* God did not reckon it enough, that the doctrine of the cross should be matter of scripture-record,—a written doctrine. Although people have it recorded, and have access to read it in their Bibles, yet this does not supersede the necessity of preaching it, nor should it make men less careful of embracing all possible opportunities of hearing it. If a man's finding the gospel-doctrine in the Scriptures should be thought sufficient to render it unnecessary for him to wait

upon

upon the preaching of it, then it would follow, that it was unnecessary for Christ to appoint preachers. He might have instructed and converted souls, and might have edified his church, as well by giving them his gospel *to read*, as by appointing officers through whose means they might *bear it*. But this carries on its front, a daring and blasphemous challenge of his infinite wisdom, as well as of his sovereign and gracious will. In the ordinary state of the church, the Lord hath made a gospel-ministry, or (which is the same thing) *the preaching of the cross*, an ordinance some way essential to the salvation of mens souls, Rom. x. 14. 17. *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they bear without a-preacher? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* The Lord is not, indeed, absolutely restrained to the preaching of the word, or rather, he hath not confined himself to make *it alone* the mean of salvation. Where persons are, in the course of holy Providence, shut up from opportunities of hearing the word preached in the public assemblies of the church; or, when they are, by some means or other, deprived of their teachers, the Lord can, and often doth, both convert and edify them by the *word read*. But, on the other hand, when persons *wilfully* *contemn and neglect* the public preaching of the word, it is not at all to be expected, that their souls should prosper, however much they may pretend to observe and regard the reading of it. *Every thing is beautiful in its season*; and when the Lord gives opportunity to hear the word preached, that is a call for his people to attend. There must be a public preaching of the cross, God, of his abundant good-

ness, having taken this method to provide fully for mens being acquainted with it. And he pays great regard to this ordinance, by, *most ordinarily*, making it the mean of conversion. This was the case under the ministry, both of Christ himself, and of his apostles. Nor is there any reason to think, that, in ordinary circumstances, it should not still be the case. The promise given, for the encouragement of the preachers of the cross, implies as much in it, Matth. xxviii. 20. Mark xvi. 15, 16. And this fact of *preaching* being a divine ordinance, lays all who are called to be so employed, under an indispensable necessity to persevere in that work, whatever discouragements they may meet with. 1 Cor. ix. 16. *For though I preach the gospel, says Paul, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.*

We shall not proceed further at this time; but, leaving the remainder of the subject till afterwards, shall conclude with a very short improvement.

From what hath been presently said, every person may learn, that he should be careful what doctrine is preached to him. We are not only to *take heed how*, but also *what we hear*. We are to *cease to bear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge*, Prov. xix. 27. The gospel,—that which is properly so called, is, we have seen, *the preaching of the cross*. Those sermons must be something else than gospel, which do not direct men to the cross of Christ, as the only way of salvation. It is dangerous to sit under the ministrations of teachers, who either *contradict* this doctrine, or *conceal* it. There can be no right food for souls; where it is not

the great theme of all public administrations. You are careful about your daily food. Though it may be homely and coarse, yet you wish to have it wholesome; and you will refuse what, you have reason to apprehend, is poisonous, or detrimental to health. How much more should you be careful about the food of your precious souls! *As new-born babes, desire ye the sincere,—the pure, unmixed, unadulterated milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*

Seek to be reconciled to the doctrine of a free salvation by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every man is, by nature, an enemy to this doctrine. It is quite unpalatable to his corrupt taste. Pray for experience of the power of Christ, along with the preaching of his cross, for *casting down your vain imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*—Consider and admire the display of the love of God which is given in the cross of Christ. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*—Be thankful for the preaching of the cross,—for the everlasting gospel,—that ever you heard such a comfortable truth, as this, That Christ died on a cross, to save guilty men from sin and destruction.—Beware of despising his cross, or the preaching of it, considering the danger they are in who do so.—Though too many reckon it *foolishness*, be you wise for yourselves; and let your souls rest upon the atonement and righteousness of Jesus, as the sole ground of your hope of salvation; saying, as Paul, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

S E R M O N II.

CONTEMPT OF THE GOSPEL WILL BE AT-
TENDED WITH PERDITION.

I COR. i. 18.

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.

OWING to the corruption of human nature, things are very much mistaken by mankind. What is really good is ready to be reckoned bad, and what is bad is apt to be called good. Sin, the most detestable of all things, is beloved; and holiness, a most lovely object in itself, is universally hated, by men in an unregenerated state. This perverseness of the natural disposition and taste of mankind, is condemned and sharply reprov'd by God. *Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, Isa. v. 20.*

It is owing to this corrupt and perverse inclination, that the ways of sin, though they lead to destruction, are so greatly frequented: *Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.* It is owing to this, that the ways of true religion and godliness are chosen by so very few. To this it is owing, that the
best

best men and the best things are loaded with bad names. From this corruption it was, that Christ himself, when upon earth, was called a *deceiver*, a *glutton*, a *wine bibber*, and a *friend of publicans and sinners*. And it is from the very same principle, that his precious gospel is counted *foolishness* by many, according to this text: *The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.*

Having, in the former discourse on this subject, made some observations concerning *the preaching of the cross*, let us now proceed,

II. To consider what it is here said to be, as to some men,—*foolishness.*

Here it may be proper to consider, *1st*, *What of it is foolishness to them*; and, *2dly*, *Whence it is that they reckon it foolishness.*

1st, Let us consider *what of the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish.* And we will find, that both *the matter* and *the manner* of it, is so.

I. *The matter* of this preaching is foolishness to them that perish. The matter of the gospel is divine,—of divine authority and revelation; but it is exceedingly opposite to mens natural apprehensions. The apostle informs us, ver. 23. that the *preaching of Christ crucified*, was unto the Jews a *stumbling block*, and unto the Greeks *foolishness*. The Jews pretended to be very intelligent in matters of religion; and, indeed, it rendered them inexcusable, that they had the great means of knowledge,—the Scriptures of truth. They had great *advantage* above those of the Gentile world; *chiefly*, because that *unto them were committed the oracles of God*, Rom. iii. 1, 2. The Greeks boasted much of the progress they had made

made in human literature; especially by their philosophers and poets; who were esteemed *the men of wisdom*. But both Jews and Greeks were enemies to the preaching of the cross. The shallow and carnal wisdom of which they were possessed, could not fit them for perceiving any truth or excellency in *the doctrine of godliness*. Many things in it appeared, in their eyes, to be very *foolish*; and, would to God, that these things did not still continue to be accounted such, by many who have access to hear the gospel! The doctrine of the divinity of the Redeemer's person was remarkably offensive both to Jews and Greeks. Though he appeared in human nature, yet he was the true and eternal God. This doctrine Christ himself preached, and by that means rendered himself very odious to the blinded Jews, John x. 33. *For a good work*, said they to him, *we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God*. This doctrine Paul, and the rest of the holy apostles of the Lamb, preached most plainly and openly. They declared that the person, *whom the princes of this world crucified*, was *the Lord of glory*; and that *Christ*, who, *concerning the flesh, came of the Israelites*, was, nevertheless, *ever all, God blessed for ever*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. Rom. ix. 5. But this appeared to be foolishness to the unbelieving Jews and ignorant Greeks. They could not conceive, that a person, who appeared in the fashion of a man, and in the form of a servant,—who suffered so much while he lived, and was put to death with so much ignominy,—should be the true and eternal God. Yet in this lies the mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. iii. 16. There are many still to whom this doctrine is foolishness; although, if it be taken away, the whole

whole mystery of our salvation through Christ falls, at once, to the ground. The doctrine of Christ's Godhead is the rock on which the church's faith and her salvation are built.—The restoration of men from an estate of sin and misery, unto the enjoyment of all true happiness, by the cross of Christ, is another doctrine, which *they that perish* reckon foolish. It was so, in the opinions of the Jews and Greeks, as we have seen. To carnal men it appears an absurdity, that that very person should be *the Saviour of the world*, who seemed to be unable to deliver himself from the hands of men, cruel and unjust; and that he should actually accomplish the salvation of sinners, by submitting to be put to death upon a cross. Yet this is the doctrine of *all Scripture*, about the method of our pardon and acceptance with God. Eph. i. 7. 1 Pet. i. 18. and iii. 18.

2. The *manner* of the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish. While this doctrine is every way worthy of God, as to the matter of it; so He hath appointed it to be published in a very wonderful manner,—in a manner quite contrary to what would naturally occur to men. There is an astonishing plainness and simplicity belonging to the dispensation of the gospel. This is manifest from considering, both who are employed in preaching the cross, and the manner in which it is to be preached by them.

The persons whom the Lord employs in this work, are *men,—imperfect men,—men of like passions and infirmities with others*. The Lord hath not employed angels to preach to us, because we, in our present state, could not bear the glory of those heavenly beings. God doth not appear, immediately, to preach it

it himself, because his infinite majesty and glory would overwhelm us; so that we might say, as the Israelites to Moses, *Exod. xx. 19. Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.* The Lord hath, therefore, pitched upon men for this purpose, that their presence may not make us afraid. And these weak men have no power to render their preaching effectual, more than the prophet, when called to *prophecy unto the dry bones, Ezek. xxxvii.* The success which such feeble instruments often have in their work, is an undoubted proof, that the institution of preaching is divine. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* How mean, and yet how successful, were the first preachers of the gospel! Some of them had been poor fishermen, and others of them were of equally low birth and occupation. They were illiterate, vulgar and unpolished. They were not taken from the more exalted or learned ranks in life, God designing, in this dispensation particularly, to *choose the foolish, the weak, and the base things of this world, to confound the mighty, the noble, and the wise.* This, however, made *the preaching of the cross* to be accounted *foolishness* by the men of that age. The gospel message was treated as absurd, and the messengers were *made the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things.*

Carnal reason cannot conceive, that *preaching*, by men encompassed with infirmities, should be a means of conversion and renovation,—of making men *new creatures*; especially, when we add to this, that, by Christ's authority, the doctrine of his cross is to be preached with the greatest plainness of speech. Our

apostle

apostle informs us, that he was sent to preach the gospel, *not with the wisdom of words, not with excellency of speech, nor with the enticing words of man's wisdom*, ver. 17. and chap. ii. 1. 4. By all these we are taught, that simplicity of language is to be studied in delivering the Lord's message. This is necessary, that the meanest Christian in the visible church may understand. And we must be convinced, that the most unlearned and vulgar have a right to be informed, when we consider, that it is about a matter of such indispensably interesting importance, as the salvation of their immortal souls. The plain and simple manner, however, in which the gospel is, by express command, to be preached, gives offence to many. Thus when Paul preached at Athens, because he did not gratify the corrupt humours of his hearers, either by the matter or the manner of his preaching, they despised both him and it, Acts xvii. 18.—Let us,

2dly, Consider *whence it is*, that men are disposed to reckon the preaching of the cross foolishness.

1. This proceeds from *spiritual blindness and ignorance*. We are aware, that there are many who reckon the gospel foolishness, whom, in one view, it would be unjust and improper to call ignorant men. Many such happen to be very learned, and very wise. But they are only (what the apostle calls, ver. 26.) *wise men after the flesh*. Whatever degrees of human knowledge they may have attained unto, *they*, surely, are blind and ignorant in God's eye, who esteem *the wisdom of God* to be *foolishness*. Now, the cross of Christ; or, the method of salvation for sinners by it, is *the wisdom of God*, ver. 24. and is called *the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10.

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Such people are ignorant of themselves. They are insensible of the corruption and wickedness of their hearts and ways. Like the members of the Laodicean church, they *think they are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing; and know not, that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* They are ignorant of the infinite evil of sin, and do not believe it to be an offence deserving the wrath and curse of God, Gal. iii. 10. Rom. vi. 23. They are ignorant of the infinite holiness and justice of God,—that *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and will by no means clear the guilty.* Their eyes were never opened to behold the matters contained in divine revelation, and, hence, they neither know themselves, nor God aright. They have neither seen sin in its vileness and malignancy, nor the necessity and excellency of Christ Jesus. 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The blindness of the natural understanding is in nothing more apparent than in this,—that while many men shew the most ready apprehension of the affairs of the present life, they at the same time exhibit the most grievous incapacity to know and regard the things which belong to their everlasting peace.

2. This proceeds from *pride and selfconceit.* The doctrine of salvation by the cross of Christ is a humbling doctrine to the creature. It tends to exalt all the perfections of God, but especially his free, sovereign, and rich grace. For *by grace ye are saved. To the praise of the glory of his grace, he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* But this doctrine is cal-

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culated to level human pride,—*that no flesh may glory in his presence, and that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.*

Man is naturally a very proud creature. This is a part of the image of Satan, which he hath contracted, in consequence of his losing the image of God, which was originally drawn upon his soul. He is proud of himself, and *vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.* Though *he is nothing*, yet he *thinks himself to be something*, and thus *deceives himself*, Gal. vi. 3. He imagines that he is capable of recovering himself from a state of guilt, and of procuring God's favour, in less or more, by some selfish efforts at reformation. He does not believe, that he is morally *dead in trespasses and sins*, and that, until he be made alive by divine power, he can do no good thing. To tell such a person, that he can do nothing for himself, and that he must be indebted to the cross of Christ for the whole of his salvation, or that otherwise he must perish, is a position which strikes so directly against the natural pride of his heart, that he is ready to resent it as an insult. Hence he boasts of *the goodness of his heart*, the *honesty* and *inoffensiveness of his life*, and he cannot but think, that God must have some respect to him, on that account. This was the case with these mentioned, Rom x. 3. *They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* This vain conceit which men have of themselves, and of their own righteousness, lies at the root of all the contempt that is poured upon the doctrine of the cross.

3. This proceeds from the *natural enmity* of the heart against God. We might, at first, have reason

to be surprised, that the doctrine of salvation for sinners by the cross of Christ,—a doctrine which displays so much love, and grace, and condescension, on God's part toward them,—should ever at all be opposed, or should for a moment be treated as foolish by any of them. But our wonder must cease, when it is considered, that the heart of man is naturally set against God, and against every thing that is of God. The words of the apostle to this purpose are express: Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* It is no small proof of the divinity of the doctrine of the cross, that men are by nature so universally set against it. For, it is not this, or that man only, who reckons it foolishness, but every man does so, who is not supernaturally enlightened. If this doctrine were apt to meet with general reception and entertainment among men, we would have reason to suspect that it is not of God; because the Scripture tells us, that *the carnal mind is enmity against God*, and that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*. Nor is there a more glaring proof of reigning enmity against the Most High God, than the bitterness, as well as the contempt, with which the doctrine of a free salvation through the cross of Christ, has been treated by many. This is truly matter of mourning, and will be so to all the friends of the gospel, as well as it was to Paul, Phil. iii. 18. *Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.* These are enemies to God, and will be treated as such; for there is no peace with God, nor love to him, where the heart is inimical to the cross. It is, indeed, by the cross alone, that the enmity of the heart

heart is slain, and that reconciliation to God takes place. Rom. v. 10. *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.*

4. This proceeds from *the power which Satan has over natural men.* Though their own ignorance, pride, and enmity, lie at the root of their opposition to the cross of Jesus, yet all these, and other corruptions, are under the management of *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.* It is thus that the apostle accounts for mens indifference about, and opposition to, the gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them.* Satan is called the *god of this world*, because he has a natural dominion over all men, and, notwithstanding the dispensation of grace, still retains his power over the greater part of them. He has the throne in every unrenewed heart ; for he is said to be *in them* who are *blinded* by him. He knows that the gospel is a most powerful engine erected for battering down his kingdom. He, therefore, hates it with a perfect hatred, and endeavours to prevent its success, by *blinding the minds* of men. He exerts his utmost influence, and uses every mean, to keep them in ignorance and error, and to foment their prejudices against the doctrine of the cross. He cannot prevent the light of gospel truth from shining in the world, but he leaves no method untried, to prevent its shining into hearts. And very wonderful is the power which he seems to have, in this respect, over many men, who, though very agreeable members of civil so-

ciety, and useful in their places and stations, yet continue inveterate enemies to the doctrine of the cross. Under the baleful influence of this arch-enemy, they are kept ignorant of themselves, of the extent of the divine law, of the holiness and justice of God, of the dreadful consequences of sin; and all this, to persuade them, that there is no necessity for the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Very sad, however, is the account given of such. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*—This leads us to the

III. Head of our method, which is, to take a view of the manner in which those, to whom *the preaching of the cross is foolishness*, are here characterised. The apostle denominates them, *them that perish*. This is a designation full of alarm, and may well *make the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle*. Yet it is no less true than dreadful. All who *contemn* the preaching of the cross of Christ, are *presently* in a *perishing* condition; continuing to do so, they must *perish for ever*; and both these flow from their *own unbelief and obstinacy*.

1. They are *presently* in a *perishing* condition. The word here used, not only denotes the future misery awaiting them, but is expressive of the present wretchedness of their state. They perish under sin, which they will find, sooner or later, to be a *burden too heavy for them to bear*. Our blessed Lord speaks of men *dying in their sins*, John viii. 24. Sin is the death of the soul. Under the power and dominion of it, the soul is divested of every principle of spiritual life, and is absolutely incapable of any motion towards God, or towards that which is truly good. The proper life of a soul lies, not merely in

its being endowed with the necessary rational faculties, but in the moral conformity of all these faculties to the holy nature and will of God. Though a man be possessed of reasoning powers, and have greatly improved these by learning and study, yet, if he be not *renewed in the spirit of his mind* by the power of the Holy Ghost, his soul, with all its boasted endowments, is still *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. How many are thus perishing under the power of spiritual death, *being alienated from the life of God; through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their minds!*

But besides this, the contemner of the cross of Christ is perishing under an accumulated load of unpardoned guilt. Every sin, in thought, word, and deed, is a crime committed against God, the Supreme Lord and Lawgiver. It has a guilt in it, rising in atrocity, in proportion to the infinite majesty of that Being, of whose law it is a violation, and whose authority it tramples upon. Of consequence, it cannot but be highly offensive unto him, and must necessarily subject the sinner to such punishment, as an infinite Avenger is capable of inflicting. Now, let it be considered, how innumerable the sins of every man are,—that they *are more than the hairs upon his head*, and that every one of them renders him criminal before God,—an object of his displeasure and wrath: And then see, if a person, thus *laden with iniquity*, for which he himself can make no atonement, and who rejects the atonement which Christ hath made, be not properly designed *one that perisheth*.

Such a person is presently under the curse of God's law. That dreadful sentence which was passed up-
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on the whole human race in consequence of their apostasy from God, continues in full force against all who have not fled to *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling*. The Spirit of God declares, that they *are under the curse, and that every one of them is cursed*, Gal. iii. 10. Though they may have a large portion of the common gifts of Providence; though they may be free of many of those troubles, with which others are visited; though they may seem to possess peace, and ease, and joy, and may laugh at those who are exercised about sin and salvation; yet they are presently under a sentence of eternal death. John iii. 18, 36. *He that believeth not is condemned already; he shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*. Could it be expected, that a poor criminal, who is condemned to die, should possess an easy mind? Where persons have occurred so fatally desperate as to despise the sentence of the law, and to sport with death, attended, too, with violence and shame,—they have justly been considered as great objects of commiseration. But of how much greater folly shall they be thought guilty, and what consummate objects of pity are they, who, under a sentence of eternal death, continue careless and secure, study to *spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures*, set death and judgment at defiance, and say, *We shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts?* Such persons may be addressed in the striking words of Elihu, Job xxxvi. 18. *Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee*.—In fine, the contemners of the method of salvation by the cross, are presently perishing in that woful state described

described by the apostle, Eph. ii. 11, 12. They are *without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*

2. If they persist finally in treating the gospel of Christ as foolishness, they must *perish for ever*. The Spirit of God assures us, that *the end of all such is destruction*, Phil. iii. 18, 19. Nothing can prevent their endless misery, seeing they reject the only *hope set before them*. There is not *salvation in any other*: *for there is not another name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*. The curse under which they are must be executed upon them for ever and ever, because, as finite creatures, they are absolutely unable to bear the full execution of it. This curse is neither believed nor felt by them now, though it adds weight to every stroke of calamity which they have to endure, and is even mingled with every cup of worldly comfort of which they partake. But at last, it will *bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder*. It will *root them out of their tabernacles, and bring them to the king of terrors*. It will *drive them from light into darkness, and chase them out of the world*. It will fix them in a state of inconceivable anguish and woe. They shall be deprived of the enjoyment of every temporal good thing. Though they *heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; though their barns be filled with plenty, and their presses burst out with new wine*; yet from all these, and other good things, they must be for ever separated. *When they die, they shall carry nothing away*. They shall be for ever without any spiritual light, life, and comfort. They shall feel the loss of God's favour and *loving-kindness*,

kindness, which is better than life. From heaven they shall be eternally shut out, and *in hell* shall they *lift up their eyes, being in torments.* By the most painful experience they shall know, that the God; whom they now *fear not, is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* And *who knows the power of Jehovah's anger?* According to his fear, so is his *wrath.* None can conceive the tormenting efficacy of that indignation, which the Scripture frequently speaks of, under the phrases of *everlasting destruction, everlasting burnings, and unquenchable fire,* 2 Theff. i. 8, 9. Isa. xxxiii. 14. Matth. iii. 12.

3. Those who despise the preaching of the cross, as foolishness, do *perish through their own unbelief and obstinacy.* Their destruction does not flow from any want of value in the Redeemer's cross, to procure their deliverance from sin and hell, and their restoration to eternal blessedness and glory. There is an infinite virtue and efficacy in his blood to cleanse every sinner *from all sin,* 1 John i. 7. Never did a person appear in the world, who had crimes so numerous, or so aggravated, as that *the sacrifice of Christ* could not *put them away.* We reckon this an eternal truth, which has been asserted by the friends of the cross of Christ, that there is an infinite intrinsic value in his blood, sufficient to procure the redemption of the whole world, if God had been pleased so to appoint it. So that men do not perish, because Christ is not able to save them: for *he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him,* Heb. vii. 25. Nor do any, who live in the gospel-church, perish, because they have not access to the cross of Christ, or, because they have not a proper warrant to fly to it for the safety of their

their precious souls. For, as there is a sufficient remedy provided in Christ's obedience unto death, so this is most freely and openly exhibited to all in the word of the gospel. To this end he hath appointed the doctrine of his cross to be *preached*. To whom? To every man without exception. *Preach the gospel*, says the King of the church, *to every creature*,—to every rational creature, the greatest sinners not excepted. Therefore they do not perish, either because the Saviour is not sufficiently able, or because their access to him is not sufficiently full and warranted. But they perish, because they reckon the doctrine of his cross *foolishness*. They do not believe the divine testimony about the sinfulness and misery of their condition, or about the absolute necessity and infinite sufficiency of the mediation of Christ, in order to their salvation. When called to fly to him by faith, and to depend on that righteousness, which he completed on the cross, as the only method of their pardon and acceptance with God,—their hearts, at least, reply with indignation, *This is an hard saying, who can bear it?* The contemners of the cross are guilty of a wilful rejection of the Divine Saviour. *They will not come to him, that they may have life.* *All day long he stretcheth forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people*, John v. 40. Rom. x. 21. They perish, therefore, by their own fault. And, as their contempt of Christ crucified, exhibited in the gospel, aggravates their guilt in the sight of God, so it will augment their misery, and render them more inexcusable than those who never enjoyed the dispensation of the grace of God. If Christ had not come, and, by his gospel, spoken unto them, they would not, comparatively, have had sin; but

but now they have no cloak for their sin. They may be truly said to perish with their own consent : because, while they despise and reject the mystery of salvation through the cross of Christ, it amounts to no less than this, that they will rather abide the consequences of their sin and guilt, than accept of salvation in this way. And this, in the estimation of the personal Wisdom of God, is nothing else than *choosing to perish.* Prov. viii. 35, 36. *Whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul : all they that hate me love death.*

It remains, that a few inferences be added, for the improvement of this subject.

1. From it we may infer, that the natural condition of all men is dreadful. The descriptive character here given to the enemies of the gospel is not peculiar to them, but is common to all the descendants of Adam. Let every gospel-hearer know, that he is naturally in a perishing condition. He is guilty and depraved ; the curse of God's law is in force against him ; he is exposed to all the effects of Jehovah's wrath, in this world, and in the next ; and from this state he has no ability to work any deliverance for himself. Those who are now saved by the cross of Christ, were once in this condition, Rom. v. 6, 8.

2. Behold here, the infinite grace and condescension of our Lord Jesus. That those who were perishing might be saved, he voluntarily engaged to become a Surety in their room, that he might obey the whole law, and endure the most humiliating and painful sufferings, under its curse. He not only li-

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ved, as a servant, but he died the death of a slave and a malefactor. *He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* JEHOVAH was under no necessity to plan and execute such a method of salvation for miserable men. He might have glorified his justice in their everlasting destruction, and would have been eternally blessed and happy, though they had perished for ever. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, and ready to perish, laid our help upon One who is mighty.* The eternal Son voluntarily engaged to give his life a ransom for many. Consider, gospel-hearer, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

3. Hence infer, who are the fools in the gospel-church. Wherever you see a man, who treats the gospel of Christ with contempt, who affects to ridicule the doctrine of salvation by the cross, or who is regardless of it, as if it were unworthy of his notice, there you see a fool. The man who despises the gospel is despising himself,—is doing the greatest wrong to his own soul. If he set at nought God's counsel, and wilfully reject the only way of salvation, which God ever did, or ever will, reveal among men, where will he fly for help? *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that God hath spoken!* God is not willing that any should perish: but the conduct of unbelievers imports, that they are rather willing to perish, than to be saved by the cross. *This their way is their folly.* By despising

the gospel-salvation, they render themselves contemptible and base in the sight of God. And if the nature and spirit of our holy religion allowed us to contemn and despise any fellow creature, it would, doubtless, be that man, who is *an enemy to the cross of Christ*.

4. The preachers of the cross may learn, that they ought not to be ashamed of their Lord, nor of his message, although it is foolishness to many. It is so, only *to them that perish*. The men who, with bold impiety, presume to account *the glorious gospel of the blessed God foolishness*, will not scruple to call the preachers of it *fools*. But this is no dishonour, considering from whom the charge comes, and the ground of it. The reproach would rather lie in having the approbation or good opinion of such men. There is every reason to imitate our apostle, who, in spite of all the rage and ridicule of Jews and Greeks, was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*, Rom. i. 16.

Let gospel-hearers be persuaded of the necessity of the cross of Christ, in order to their salvation. This necessity appears from your being sinners before God, and unable to make any atonement for your sins.—Consider the justice and holiness of God, as displayed in the sufferings and death of *the Lord of glory*. God spared not his own Son, when he found him substituted into the room of sinful men. How is it supposable, then, that he could have spared them, without a complete satisfaction?—Let these who are *ready to perish* take the benefit of Christ's mediatory satisfaction and righteousness, by faith. Him doth God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.

blood. Here perishing sinners have found peace, pardon, and acceptance with a holy and just God.—Pray for the accomplishment of those promises, which secure the gathering of wretched sinners to the only Saviour, by means of the gospel, Isa. xxvii. 13. *In that day the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish,—and shall worship the LORD.*—Beware of reckoning *the preaching of the cross foolishness*, or treating it as such; for if you do, it is at your utmost peril.—Improve the dispensation of the gospel for *making you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*—Remember to pity, and to pray for, those who continue to despise it. They are in a dreadful state, according to this text: *for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.*

S E R M O N I I I .

THE GOSPEL IS A SPECIAL MEAN OF SAL-
VATION TO SOME.

I COR. i. 18.

—*But unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

THE Scriptures declare, that *salvation is of the Lord.* It is of his infinite grace, sovereignty, and wisdom; that it was provided for sinners, and revealed to them. They were reduced to a state

of such deplorable wretchedness, that none could extricate them but God himself. *I looked, says he, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation.* The purchase of salvation was made by God our Saviour, who *gave his life a ransom for many.* And that sinners may be informed about this salvation, and may obtain it, he hath instituted ordinances in his church. For this end, especially, he hath appointed the preaching of the everlasting gospel, and hath interposed his high authority, that men should believe on him unto eternal life. This appears, in a human view, to be a very improper method of dealing with sinners. If they be *dead in trespasses and sins*; if they be obstinate and rebellious; and if their natural enmity be more keenly set against God's method of saving men by his Son;—then the plain preaching of the gospel seems to be a mean very inadequate to the purpose intended. The heart of every sinner is strongly fortified against receiving any impression by the word. To many, who have access to hear it, it is an object of avowed contempt. The doctrines of free grace are contrary to the natural apprehensions, pride, and wishes of men, who *go about to establish their own righteousness.* And, in general, there are comparatively few disposed to receive the gospel by faith, and improve it as *the gospel of their salvation.* After all, there is no reason to be ashamed of it, or to be discouraged, either on account of the open contempt that is poured upon it, or because it has no gracious effect upon many who hear it. It is still Christ's ordinance, and, therefore, shall accomplish

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all the gracious purposes which by it he hath designed to perform.

We have, in former discourses, considered the *mournful account* which the apostle gives of the opinions of some concerning the gospel, together with the fatal consequence to themselves, as expressed in the first part of this verse. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.* We may now turn our attention to the *pleasant and comfortable account* given of the blessed effects of the gospel upon others, in the last part of the verse. *But unto us which are saved it is the power of God.* Observe here,

1. What *the preaching of the cross* is said to be. *It is the power of God.* This means, that it becomes effectual, as the great instrument of God's saving power. It is accompanied with *an exceeding greatness of his power*, as the expression is, Eph. i. 19. By the power of God, it is made effectual for the spiritual quickening and enlivening of dead souls, of bringing them to a proper knowledge of the mystery of the cross of Christ, and to confidence before God, on that ground. It becomes efficacious, in their justification, by bringing their souls to a proper rest before God upon the blood of the cross; and it is efficacious for their sanctification, as the necessary and merited fruit of the cross.

2. To whom it is the power of God. *Unto us which are saved.* This is to be understood of real believers, who, through faith in the cross of Christ, are already in a state of salvation. It does not immediately respect the future perfected salvation, which believers have to look forward unto in the world to come; but has a reference to their present blessed state, as pardoned, accepted, sanctified, and

assured of being *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time*. The preaching of the cross is the great mean of bringing them into this happy state.

In discoursing upon this subject, we may,

I. Consider, more particularly, what *the preaching of the cross* is here said to be; *it is the power of God*.

II. To whom it is so. *Unto us which are saved*; and, then, add a few inferences.

I. We are to consider, more particularly, what *the preaching of the cross* is here said to be; *it is the power of God*.

And we may, *1st*, Mention a few things imported in its being called *the power of God*; and, *2dly*, Show in what respects it is so.

1st, We are to mention some things imported in its being called *the power of God*.

1. It refers to the application of Christ's purchase unto the souls of men. He made a purchase of salvation by *his obedience unto death*. Hence he is called *the Author of eternal salvation*, Heb. v. 9. The purchase of it was made by a price of infinite value, which the Surety paid down to the law and justice of God,—even the price of his own precious blood, Heb. ix. 12. Under the gospel dispensation, this salvation is actually bestowed upon sinners, through an application of the purchase of it unto them. This is effectuated by his power. On that account he is said to be *mighty to save*, Isa. lxiii. 1. In that verse he is represented as returning from the work of redeeming a lost people, by the price he paid down

down to justice, and the victory he obtained over Satan, in his bloodshedding and death. Yet he is spoken of as having further work to do, and as still able for it. He was *travelling in the greatness of his strength, and mighty to save*. He had the further work of applying the purchased redemption to souls, and he was still able for it by his infinite power.

This power is exercised by means of the preaching of the cross, for bringing sinners to have an actual interest in his satisfaction and purchase, in order to their salvation. It is on this account that men are said to be *saved by the gospel*, 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. They are not *saved by it*, in itself considered, but only as it belongs to the means which the Mediator uses in the application of his salvation. This is not left to depend on the will or power of man, otherwise the gospel would be altogether unsuccessful. But it is made effectual, by his almighty power, as to all the objects of redeeming love, John vi. 37.

2. *The preaching of the cross* being called *the power of God*, imports, that there is a gracious work accomplished in the souls of men, by means of it. The purchase of salvation was made without men, but the application of it is, by the power of the Redeemer, exerted, and operating within them. Hence God is said to *work in men*, Phil. ii. 13. And as God *worketh* graciously in men, by means of the word, so, in that respect, it is said to *work effectually in them*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Thus the work of grace in souls is sometimes ascribed unto the gospel: yet it is not thus by itself considered, but the power of God coming along with it, that is productive of a saving change in the hearts of men. By this power of God they are rescued from that state of universal corruption,

corruption, deadness, and enmity, which they are in through the fall, and made to enjoy *newness of life*. They are *created again in Christ Jesus unto good works*; and have to say, *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake*. And there is no benefit got by the gospel, but as it is accompanied with, and made the means of, this divine efficacy upon mens hearts.

3. This imports, the exceeding greatness of the work of grace upon the soul. The work designed to be effectuated by means of this preaching is so great, as to require nothing less than the infinite power of God. See it expressed in our Lord's words to Paul at his conversion, *Acts xxvi. 17, 18. Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith which is in me*. How was the apostle to perform all this great work? In no other way could he be active or instrumental in it, than by preaching the gospel faithfully and plainly unto sinners, who were spiritually blind, and under the power of Satan, *who led them captive at his will*. Yet multitudes were converted by his ministry, and he had many for his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. This was an incontrovertible proof that divine power attended the preaching of the cross, and made it, in the experience of sinners, to be indeed *the power of God*.

The conversion of men is a work for which nothing less than the Redeemer's power is sufficient. It includes in it the renovation of a corrupted nature,

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and the rendering it conform to the nature of God, which is a change more wonderful, and more arduous, than to make the Ethiopian white. It is called the *taking* of one heart out of a man, and *giving* him another, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. It is called a *creating*, a *making all things new*, which is the proper work of God. And in this there is a greater and more glorious display of the power of JEHOVAH, than is to be seen in the first creation. For when God created all things out of nothing, as he had no being to assist him, so neither had he any thing to oppose him. But when he comes, under the dispensation of the word, to produce a saving change upon the heart of a sinner, all the corrupt principles in it, under the influence of Satan, conspire to oppose the good work. The heart, in which the saving change is to be wrought, is filled with enmity against God, and against the word and work of his grace; and, in that respect, it chiefly appears to verify what is asserted concerning it, by *him who cannot lie*, that it is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9.

4. This imports, that the preaching of the cross is an instrument, and no more than an instrument, in the application of salvation unto the souls of men. We say, it is an instrument or mean, in the hand of God, for the salvation of men. This, doubtless, is the direct meaning of the apostle in the words before us. And the same he expresses in verse 21. *It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* The *foolishness of preaching* is a phrase which the apostle uses, with reference to the opinions which the men of that age, who were proud of their literature and wisdom, had of it. The matter of this

this preaching, as we have already observed, was foolishness to them. That men should be saved by one who died, that they should be justified by one who was condemned, and that they should be blessed through one who was *made a curse*, and was put to an ignominious death, appeared extremely foolish doctrine. The manner of preaching the gospel, and of publishing it to the world at first, by a number of fishermen, and others equally low and mean; and that in a homely and familiar manner, without any of the gaudy airs of philosophic learning and eloquence; was weak and foolish in their eyes. But herein *the foolishness of God was wiser than men*, and *the weakness of God was stronger than men*; for what could not be done by all the efforts of their philosophers and doctors, was effected by that very *foolishness of preaching* which they despised.

But we have also said, that the gospel is, in itself considered, no more than an instrument. It can do nothing effectually by itself, more than an instrument can perform a piece of work, without being made use of by a workman. It is not the mean of salvation, by any intrinsic sufficiency or virtue, more than the rod, with which Moses and Aaron performed miracles in the land of Egypt, or than the sounding of rams horns in the overturning of Jericho's walls. It is only *mighty* in the hand of the Almighty Redeemer, 2 Cor. x. 4. Hence Paul himself ascribed it wholly to *the power of God*; and, in the most explicit manner, declares that all his own success in preaching was owing to this power. Chap. iii. 6. *I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase.*

5. This imports, the indispensable necessity of the preaching of the cross. Though it has no efficacy by itself, yet it is necessary, as the instituted mean, by which the power of God is exerted upon men, to their salvation. It is *the rod of his strength*, by which he rules in the midst of his enemies, and makes them a willing people in the day of his power, Psalm cx. 2, 3. Though it can be of no avail to the salvation of any without him, yet *the effectual working of his power* is not to be expected, but by means of it. It is, therefore, a necessary mean of salvation. The saving knowledge of God, reconciliation to him, and communion with him, are blessings which cannot be enjoyed without the gospel. There is no knowledge of *Christ-crucified*, and, consequently, no knowledge of *the God of peace*, but by it. Rom. x. 14. *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* All the learning and penetration of the Greeks failed in bringing them to the knowledge of *the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.* The world by wisdom knew not God. What a necessary blessing, then, is the gospel, *by which life and immortality are brought to light?* And how highly should it be valued by those who enjoy it, seeing there is no exertion of divine power, but by it, towards persons who are capable of being rational-ly dealt with?

6. This imports, that we ought to have all our dependence upon God for the success of the gospel. *The preaching of the cross is his power*, and it has no power for doing good, but as he works by it. In itself it is a mere report about the Saviour, and his salvation;

vation; and it will not be entertained or believed, but as *the arm of the Lord* is thereby revealed. It is owing to the restraint of divine power, that there has been so much occasion for the prophet's complaint in Isa. liii. 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* When divine power attends the preaching of the cross, then the report becomes *the arm of the Lord*; it does execution against sin and Satan in the hearts of men, performs works of sovereign grace upon sinners, and subdues them to *the obedience of faith*. Then *the word of the Lord* has free course and is glorified, and *the name of the Lord Jesus* is magnified. On him, therefore, our dependence for the success of the gospel must rest. Weak as it is in itself, it shall be *mighty through God*. Happy for a people is it, when that is verified among them, which Paul said, in 1 Theff. i. 5. *Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*—We proceed,

2dly, To shew in what respects *the preaching of the cross* is *the power of God* unto them which are saved.

This refers to the effects which the gospel has upon men, when divine power accompanies it. It contains a revelation of salvation. It exhibits the scheme of infinite wisdom, grace, and power, for accomplishing it. It is a revelation of the mystery which was hid in God from eternity, but which is now made manifest in the church. It brings God's righteousness and salvation near men, and makes a free, unlimited, and unconditional offer of the same to them. But when it is *the power of God*, it has a gracious efficacy for bringing men into a state of salvation. It

is the mean by which they obtain a saving interest in Christ the Saviour. It not only brings a report about Christ unto them, but they are enabled "to receive and rest upon him for salvation, as he is freely offered unto them in the gospel."—We observe,

1. That the preaching of the cross is the power of God to men, as it is the mean of producing concern about salvation. Men are naturally thoughtless about their spiritual interests. They are laden with iniquity, under the wrath and curse of God, and are ready to perish for ever; yet they do not feel the burden that lies upon them, nor are they apprehensive of falling into everlasting misery and woe. *They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness.* They may be compared to the Laodicean church, whose condition is described in Rev. iii. 17. *Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* This was truly a sad state; but the worst circumstance was, that *she knew it not*, and therefore had no concern about it. This, however, is the common case with mankind, till the Lord, by his word, make some serious impressions upon them. They are so lost under the power of sin, so immersed in carnality, folly, and the vain or sinful pursuits of time, that all care about their precious souls and the eternal state, is totally neglected. *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.* But the Lord, by means of his word, produces a concern about salvation in the hearts of some. This he does, by convincing them that they are sinners, that they are accountable to him, and that they must appear

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before him to answer for their conduct. Such conviction is produced, more especially, by means of the law of God: for the gospel, strictly and properly taken, is the word of peace, of life, and of consolation. But, in a large sense, the gospel, or the preaching of it, takes in the exhibition of the law of God also, and, indeed, always supposes it: for, as the gospel is news about a Saviour, who *both magnified the law, and made it honourable*, so this presupposes that the law was broken and violated by sinners. Accordingly, in the dispensation of grace, God makes use of the law, in subserviency to the gospel, for awakening the guilty sinner, and leading him to see the necessity of the gospel righteousness, in order to his salvation.

By means of law precepts and threatenings, the Lord irresistibly carries the discovery of sin into a person's conscience, for raising him up from a state of spiritual lethargy, and bringing him to think about what he is, what condition he is now in, and what is hereafter to befall him. Such thoughts, may, no doubt, occasionally pass through the minds of men, who never have any truly serious and lasting concern about these important matters. Uneasy impressions, on account of their sin and misery, which take place for some time, gradually wear off, and are forgotten. *Like the morning cloud, and early dew, they pass away.* But those, upon whom God has a gracious design, cannot always get such impressions worn off. Convinced that they are sinners, and justly under the sentence of the law, their great concern is, how to be delivered from that woeful state, and how to obtain acceptance before God. The grand inquiry now is, *What shall I do to be saved?* Every other pursuit is,

for a time, lost in this. The secret language of the heart is, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?* Mic. vi. 6. The justice and holiness of God continually present themselves to him, who is a vile sinner. He knows, that he must appear before God. It is impossible, that he can get this appearance shunned. The question which occupies his mind, therefore, is, *Wherewith shall I, a guilty and condemned sinner, appear before him?*

Now, it is a strong proof, that the power of God is accompanying the word, when such concern is produced in the heart of any man; for, man is naturally a careless and thoughtless creature, both about God, and about himself. Sometimes it has "har-
rowed up the souls" of the most hardened, of the most proud and haughty sinners,—even of those, who have formerly treated all religious concern, as a subject for laughter and derision. The most impenitent have been wrought upon by the power of God's arm. The word has been made effectual for bringing multitudes to such concern at once. Witness those made mention of in Acts ii. 37. 41. In this manner, God's word answers to the account given of it, in Jer. xxiii. 29. *Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*

2. That the preaching of the cross is the power of God, as it is the mean by which Christ and salvation through him, are discovered to men. Without the gospel, they would be absolutely ignorant of the method of acceptance with God. It is peculiar to the gospel, as distinguished from every other mean of knowledge, to give a plain, and distinct account of

the method, in which a guilty sinner may meet with God, as reconciled, and at peace with him. Hence it is said to *bring life and immortality to light*, and to *guide our feet into the way of peace*, Luke i. 78, 79. In that text we have the natural condition of mankind, while without the gospel, described. They *sit in darkness*, in gross spiritual darkness, having no light to direct them how to get out of that state: they *grope in the dark like blind men*, and, like men in darkness, they wander more and more astray. They *sit in the shadow of death*: They are under the power of spiritual death, which is the shadow of eternal death in hell; like the shadow of the evening before the darkness of the night. Such is the mournful state that men are in without the gospel. But it *visits* them as *the day-spring from on high*, like the pleasant light of the morning, shewing the sinner, who was bewildered in darkness, *the way of peace with God*. The *light* of it *guides his feet into the way of peace*.

By it men obtain the knowledge of the doctrines of salvation; especially of the grand and leading doctrine of pardon and acceptance with God, through Christ, as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Accordingly the apostle says, in that similar text, Rom. i. 16.—*The gospel of Christ—is the power of God unto salvation*; and he gives this reason for saying so in ver. 17. *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed*.—The gospel reveals this righteousness as the meritorious ground or cause of salvation. And every saved person, who is come to the years of discretion, has some competent knowledge of what is meant by this righteousness, and what place belongs to it in the covenant of grace. He knows that it is
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the condition of that covenant, and the only meritorious ground upon which the blessings of it are bestowed. Many, indeed, have a speculative knowledge of this, and other principles of religion, to whom the gospel is not made the power of God unto their salvation. After all the knowledge they have acquired, they are still guilty of rejecting Christ by unbelief. But those with whom God deals by saving power, have a spiritual and internal revelation of the method of salvation through Christ made unto them. The holy Spirit reveals it to them, in the doctrine of the gospel concerning it, and discovers it to be a suitable method of relief *for them, in particular*, from all the guilt and danger of their natural condition, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 14, 15. They obtain a surprising and solacing view of the glory of IMMANUEL'S person, satisfaction, and righteousness, and of the glory of the divine perfections in the mysterious method of *redemption through his blood*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. They behold in Christ Jesus *all fulness* of what is necessary for relieving them from their guilty, polluted, and condemned state, 1 Cor. i. 30. God makes the light to break into their once-darkened understandings, so that they perceive the suitableness and glory of salvation by the cross of Christ, in a manner very different from what they formerly did. And it comes with such convincing power and evidence, that they can no more resist it, than men can prevent the sun from rising in the east. *God, saith the apostle, hath shined in our hearts.*

3. That the preaching of the cross is the power of God, as, by means of it, God overcomes the opposition, which is in the heart of man, unto the way of salvation through Christ. All the hearers of the gos-

pel are naturally enemies to it. Some avow their enmity in a more open and daring manner, by *contradicting and blaspheming* its precious and peculiar doctrines, after the example of those Jews mentioned in Acts xiii. 45. But although all are not left to go this dreadful length, yet every man is, in his unconverted state, an enemy to the gospel of the Son of God. The human heart is set against the very spirit and design of it, which is to glorify God, and to exalt his grace in the salvation of sinners, without leaving any share of the praise of it to themselves. 1 Cor. i. 29.—31. Against such a plan of salvation they are keenly set. Even the convinced sinner who is obliged to confess that he is guilty, and that he deserves punishment, manifests such reluctance to salvation through the cross of Christ, as to seek it in some other way. To what is that legal principle which is inlaid in the heart of every sinner, to be attributed, but to innate enmity against God and the gospel? This is evident from that pride and self-conceit, which prompts the sinners in Zion to entertain an opinion of their ability to do something for procuring their own recovery from a state of guilt and condemnation. The proud sinner scorns to be indebted to the righteousness of another. The preaching of the cross is a *stumbling block* to him, as to the Jews; and, in opposition to it, he takes the same course which they did, as expressed in Rom. x. 3. But the gospel, accompanied with divine power, is successful in subduing the natural opposition of the heart unto it. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge*

of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. This cannot be done by the precepts and threatenings of the law. These may convince a sinner that he is guilty, and may bring him the length of despair; but, even then, his heart is as much averse to the Saviour as ever. It is only the gracious power of God, coming along with the peaceful doctrines and promises of the gospel, that effectually overcomes the enmity of men against Christ. In this respect, it is the power of God, in the case of all true Christians. They have some experience of subduing power, bringing their stout hearts to submit to the method of grace; and thus the gospel has proved to be *the word of reconciliation* to them.

4. The preaching of the cross is the mean of inclining and enabling sinners to embrace the method of salvation by Christ Jesus. When the opposition to it is overcome, it is cheerfully acquiesced in and embraced. The soul goes out from all dependence upon itself unto Christ, in the exercise of an appropriating faith, with the greatest freedom and alacrity, Psal. cx. 3. By this means, the obstinate sinner is disposed to yield himself, as a debtor to the free and sovereign *grace of God reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* He willingly relinquisheth, and that for ever, every false foundation, which he once depended upon, and comes over to *the foundation laid in Zion*, Phil. iii. 3. The gospel is the power of God, in producing that faith in the heart, by which the soul moves toward Christ, and takes refuge in him, as *the Lord his righteousness*, Rom. x. 17.

5. In fine, the preaching of the cross is the power of God unto them which are saved, as it brings the soul to full satisfaction with the way of salvation through Christ. Men are not forced, against their will, to believe. They are not driven, but sweetly, though powerfully, drawn, to Christ for salvation. God says, *I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love.* And they say, *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.* They experience the highest satisfaction in the gospel-method of salvation. Formerly, perhaps, they were as virulent enemies to the doctrine of the cross of Christ, as ever the Jews or Greeks were, who reckoned it the most foolish thing imaginable: but, having got a discovery of it, through the Spirit of God shining upon the word, they esteem it as most valuable. *Unto them that believe Christ is precious, though he be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, unto them which stumble at the word.* The believer finds solid peace and satisfaction to his conscience and heart in the blood and righteousness of Jesus. *He joys in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the atonement.* In Christ, he sees his title to eternal life made infallibly sure, so that he cannot lose it, or come short of it. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

We shall not proceed further at this time, but leave the other head of the method to be the subject of another discourse.

As much has been said, as serves to shew, that the preaching of the cross is an invaluable blessing; because

because it is the chief instrument which God makes use of, by his power, in the salvation of men. There is nothing beside it, by which he is to be expected to begin and promote their salvation. Discourses upon mere morality, and all those empty, though florid, sermons, now too much in fashion, which have nothing of Christ, or his cross, of his righteousness and grace, in them, are no more to be expected to be *the power of God* in the salvation of sinners, than the writings of those Greek philosophers who despised the cross of Christ as a very foolish thing.—Let every gospel-hearer learn to prize the revelation of Christ by the gospel, and to be earnest with the Lord, in prayer, that it may be made the power of God to him. For, *unto them which are saved it is the power of God.*

S E R M O N I V .

THE GOSPEL IS A SPECIAL MEAN OF SALVATION TO SOME.

1 COR. i. 18.

But unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

BLESSED is the people that know the joyful sound.

What is this *joyful sound*? We answer; It is the good tidings of a free and full salvation through the mediation of Jesus Christ, which are published

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by the gospel among sinful men. It is a *joyful sound* of liberty to captives, of pardon to the guilty, of health to the diseased, and of life to the dead. It is intelligence about an able and affectionate Saviour provided for wicked men, the foes of God, who had destroyed themselves. What is that *knowledge* of the joyful sound, with which some are blessed? It is not a common knowledge of the gospel, which many men have, who do not believe it. Nor is it that knowledge of divine things, which makes men speculative, heady, and high minded. But it is the knowledge of the gospel, as God's voice speaking unto the person about something, which *especially concerneth him*. It is a knowledge of it, *not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God*. It includes a persuasion, that the gospel carries a message from God unto men, and a belief of the truth of the message, with particular application to the person himself. What is that *blessedness*, which belongs to those who know the joyful sound? We answer, that as the gospel is the *sound of peace and good will towards men*, so this spiritual knowledge of it is inseparably connected with a state of salvation. The person is brought into this happy state, and is blessed with an actual interest in a free, a full, and an infallibly certain salvation, according to this text.

Having, in the preceding discourse, considered the *preaching of the cross*, as it is the power of God unto some persons, we shall,

II. Consider to whom it is so. *Unto us which are saved*, says Paul.

He includes himself, along with other believers. It is not the language of pride and presumption, but

of faith and experience. He, and other true Christians, had real and delightful experience of the power of God attending the revelation of Christ unto them. They were formerly *the children of disobedience*, and, consequently, *the children of wrath, even as others*. But they had been brought to thoughtfulness about sin, under a work of conviction; and they had even fled to the cross of Christ for safety, under the enlightening, renewing, and enabling influences of the Holy Ghost. The preaching of the cross, which they had reckoned the greatest *foolishness*, came with such power upon their souls, that they not only believed the doctrine, but were sweetly constrained to cleave to the cross, as the only method of pardon and acceptance for such sinners as they were. They had experience of being saved from a state of unbelief and impenitence, and had a persuasion of their everlasting salvation. It is, therefore, with justice and propriety, that the apostle says of himself, and of them that had obtained like precious faith with him, *Unto us which are saved it is the power of God*.

In the former discourse, we observed, that this does not immediately refer to the future salvation, in a state of eternal glory, which the saints have to hope for, (although this is not to be excluded, because it must necessarily follow); but that it principally refers to the present state of all true Christians, in this world. As there were numbers of such happy persons in Paul's time, *even so, at this present time also there is a remnant*, who are already in a state of *salvation*, by means of *the preaching of the cross*. Of them, as much as of ancient Israel, it may be said, *Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto*

unto thee, O people saved by the Lord! Dent. xxxiii. 29.

We shall take a very concise view of that happy state which they are presently in, on account of which they are denominated such as *are saved*.

1. They are saved, as being brought into a new state in regeneration. The faith, by which they apprehend the cross of Christ for salvation, flows from the exercise of that spiritual life which is implanted in them by the Holy Ghost. The implantation of this life is what the Scripture calls *regeneration*, and *a being born again*. It is a change which is produced by the preaching of the cross, or the word of the everlasting gospel. 1 Pet. i. 23. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*—But the holy Spirit, by whom divine power is more immediately exerted in this work, is the only efficient agent. The word of the gospel, in itself considered, can here be of no efficacy. And hence our Lord calls it a *being born of the Spirit*, John iii. 5, 6. *Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.* The Scripture represents it under the notion of *being born again*, because the person, upon whom the change is produced, is made a *new creature*, and is introduced into a very new world, even the world of grace, to which he was an entire stranger. He enjoys and exercises a life which he formerly had not. Then he was lying in the dark womb of corrupt nature, but now he is born into the spiritual world. He is enabled to discern, and to be occupied about, objects formerly unknown, and he partakes of privileges of which in past time

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he had no experience. In his unconverted state, he had no more understanding of it, than Nicodemus, to whom the doctrine seemed an absurdity, according to what he said to our Lord, John iii. 4, 9. *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? How can these things be?*

Though the manner of the Spirit's operation upon the soul is very mysterious, yet the truth of it is a matter of experience to all that are saved. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* This is as real a change, as that which takes place in the raising up of a dead man, Eph. ii. 1, 5. The principle of spiritual life is infused into the soul, which was *dead in trespasses and sins*, and an universal change is produced upon it,—a change, of which every faculty partakes. The understanding, which was darkened, is endued with the light of spiritual discernment, and rendered capable of apprehending, not only the reality, but the value and excellency of spiritual objects. 1 John v. 20. *The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.* Eph. i. 18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.* The will, which is naturally perverse, and set in opposition to God, and to all that is morally and spiritually good, is renewed, and inclined to the will of God as its rule. The regenerated person *delights in the law of God after the inward man; and with the mind he serves the law of God*, Rom. vii. 22, 25. His conscience, which formerly was, either asleep in security, or was a guilt

ty accusing conscience, is made pure and holy, and, therefore, calm and easy, in being brought to rest upon the blood of atonement. His affections, which were earthly, sensual, and devilish, and so only set upon vain and sinful objects, are purified, and flow out to that which is spiritually good, and especially towards God himself, the chief good. *The desire of his soul is unto God*, and the language of it, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*. He formerly forgot God and divine things, and was only careful to *mind the things of the flesh*; now he remembers God with delight, and *gives the more earnest heed to the things which he hath heard, lest at any time he should let them slip*. Along with the soul, all the members of the body partake of a saving change; for it is impossible that the former can be renewed, and the latter continue under the bondage of corruption. Rom. vi. 13, 19. Thus the regenerated person is a new man, 2 Cor. v. 17. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new*.

2. Those to whom the preaching of the cross is the power of God, are saved, as they are brought into a state of justification before God. This is one of the many blessed fruits of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He endured it, in the joyful prospect of procuring an honourable justification for all his people, Rom. iii. 25, 26. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins;—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus*. This privilege the believer presently enjoys. It is not a blessing, which he has to look

for only in the future state, but which is now conferred upon him. Hence the apostle speaks of it, as already obtained, Rom. v. 1. *Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Ver. 9. *Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.* And, writing to the believing Corinthians, he says, *Such were some of you; but—ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus,* 1 Cor. vi. 11. O what an inestimable happiness is it, to be justified at the bar of an infinitely righteous and holy Judge, who cannot pass an improper sentence, and whose sentence can never be reversed! All those will consider it as a valuable privilege indeed, who have seen themselves in a state of guilt and condemnation, and who have felt the painful fears and horrors of such a state. When a man sees himself to be a vile perishing creature, upon the brink of eternal destruction, and when he beholds a just and holy God pursuing him with his curse, while he continues a Christless sinner; what an inconceivably gracious and acceptable change takes place, when that very guilty person is declared righteous, and is received into favour with God, upon the ground of Christ's righteousness imputed unto him, and received by faith alone! Then the dark clouds of slavish fear and terror which surrounded him, and portended the breaking of the storm of vindictive wrath upon him, are dispelled and evaporated; his *light breaks forth as the morning*, his *spiritual health springs forth speedily*, and *he walks all the day in the light of God's countenance.*

Considered in this state of justification, the believer enjoys a full and free pardon of all his iniquities, however multiplied, atrocious, and aggravated they be. Not one of them is left marked against him.

Though he ought to have them always before him, for exciting him to godly sorrow, humility, and watchfulness, yet, from the moment of his betaking himself to the cross of Christ by faith, they are forever cancelled and blotted out of God's sight as a righteous and incensed Judge, Isa. xliii. 25. *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* He has, therefore, nothing to fear from the consequences of his sin, though eternal misery might, otherwise, be expected to follow. No penal evil shall come near him. *There is no more curse, nor shall hell follow.* He obtains a full discharge of all his criminal debt, at God's bar, and who shall presume to condemn him? Rom. viii. 33, 34. He is not merely absolved from sin, so as that God shall never plead with him on account of it; but he is justified as a righteous person, and declared to be so by God himself. By the imputation of Christ's righteousness to him, he is made righteous in law, in the same way (to compare great things with small) that the payment of a debt by a cautioner is considered, in law, as equivalent to payment by the debtor himself. The creditor loses nothing by the cautioner's paying the debt. So, in justification, the righteousness of Christ becomes the sinner's, by God's act imputing it unto him; and the person, though a sinful and ungodly man in himself, is justified, as righteous, on the ground of it. O what a wonderful transposition is this! The guilt of the sinner was laid upon the Surety, and the righteousness of the Surety is accounted unto the sinner! *For he hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,* 2 Cor.

v. 21. This happy state, in which believers presently are, is not liable to any change. Though, while they are in this present evil world, sin does remain in them, it cannot be accounted to them, so as to subject them to condemnation. Their God *will not impute iniquity* unto them, Rom. iv. 7, 8. The value of the justifying righteousness continues unchangeable and eternal. Jesus Christ hath *brought in everlasting righteousness*, according to the promise of God, in Dan. ix. 24. It follows, therefore, that those who are in a state of justification before God, may well call themselves, as in the text, *us which are saved*.

3. They are *saved*, as they are brought into a state of adoption. This is another precious privilege, for the purchase of which, our Lord Jesus Christ came into an estate of humiliation, and suffered *even the death of the cross*. The truth of this the apostle testifieth, in Gal. iv. 4, 5. *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*. Sinners are, by nature, *aliens and foreigners*. Like the prodigal son, they have run from their Father's house, in a course of disobedience and rebellion, and are *no more worthy to be called his sons*. But, upon receiving Christ in the gospel, and taking the benefit of his cross, by faith, they are restored to the enjoyment of God as a father, and of all the privileges of his family. *As many as receive Christ, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*. Adoption, as to the nature of it, is the taking of a stranger, and making him a son, and

treating him, in every respect, as if he had been born in the family. Every justified person, though once a stranger and an enemy to God, is adopted into the family of grace. Hence the apostle declares, Eph. ii. 19. *Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* This privilege they enjoy entirely by Christ Jesus, who became, as it were, an alien, and was treated as a criminal, that guilty men might be made sons. Their adoption does not flow from any innate good qualities in them beyond others, but solely from the sovereign will and mere good pleasure of the Most High God, Eph. i. 5. He hath *predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* This privilege is so inconceivably great, as to fill the saints with holy wonder and praise. Behold, said the beloved disciple, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* 1 John iii. 1. They are the special objects of divine love, which is infinitely more strong and tender, than that which any earthly parent can have for his children. The Lord exercises an unremitting care about them, while they are in this world, and are exposed to many enemies, snares, and temptations. He attends to all their temporal concerns, and provides them with such portions of the good things of this life, as he sees to be necessary and beneficial for them. *Their heavenly Father knoweth that they have need of these things.* But they are, in an especial manner, blessed with a participation of the peculiar good things of his own house. They partake of the spiritual instruction, provision, raiment, protec-
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tion, and consolation of the sons of God. They shall not want correction either, when it is necessary: for *whom he loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* And in their every condition, they have access to him, as a father, and are taught to improve, and to comfort themselves in this. *Through Christ they have access by one Spirit unto the Father. And, because they are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father,* Eph. ii. 18. Gal. iv. 6.

4. Those, to whom the preaching of the cross is the power of God, may be said to be *saved*, as they are the subjects of a progressive work of sanctification. They are, not only saved already from the guilt of sin, and from that moral alienation and distance from God, which naturally takes place, but they are also saved from the reigning power and dominion of sin in them. *Sin shall not have dominion over them, for they are not under the law, but under grace.* Their freedom from the prevalence, the love, and the practice of sin, is gradually advancing in their sanctification. This blessing, as we showed in another discourse, is one of the precious fruits of the cross of Christ, according to that Scripture, Tit. ii. 14. *Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* In regeneration the principle of the divine life is implanted, and in sanctification it is gradually strengthened, and exercised. Regeneration is, properly, the beginning of the spiritual life, and sanctification is the progress and increase of it. The understanding is more and more enlightened. The believer follows on to know
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the Lord, and increaseth in the knowledge of God, Col. i. 10. His inclination to God's testimonies, and his hatred to every wicked way, are gradually strengthened. His affections are more enlivened and invigorated towards spiritual objects, and, of consequence, they are turned away, in the same proportion, from these which are vain and sinful. Sanctification is thus carried on gradually. It comes to perfection with none in this present life. Hence Christ prayed for it, in behalf of his beloved disciples, John xvii. 17. *Sanctify them through thy truth;* as if he had said, *Sanctify them* more and more; for the work was begun in them formerly, but they had not already attained, neither were already perfect.

But every true Christian is *sanctified wholly, in spirit, and soul, and body*, though not perfectly, as to the degree of holiness. He is restored to the enjoyment of God's image, which is stamped upon him, *through sanctification of the Spirit*. He is saved unto that state of conformity to God, which, in Scripture, is called *the new man*, Eph. iv. 24. This renovation by the Spirit is absolutely necessary to actual holiness, or the performance of any thing that is truly and spiritually good. An unrenewed man is no more capable of doing that which is good in the sight of God, than *a thorn* is of bearing grapes, or *a thistle* figs, Matth. vii. 16.—18. The believer, by sanctifying grace, is made active in the prosecution of holiness. He is inclined to all holy duties, and aims at the performance of them, according to the will of God, and with an eye to his glory. *This is a faithful saying,—that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works,* Tit. iii. 8. The sanctified person abhors, and, through
grace,

grace, guards against all sin, and endeavours universal obedience, from a genuine principle of love to God and his law. *His soul keeps God's testimonies;* and he *loves them exceedingly*. A wicked or profane man is, therefore, *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*. He may have the presumption to boast, that he *has a good heart*, while he indulges himself in riot, dissipation and profaneness. But let him not be deceived; for, whether he believe it or not, he is an *enemy to the cross of Christ*. In vain do any pretend, that they believe on Christ crucified for eternal happiness, and that they have any well-founded hope of it, if they continue habitually unholy, or indulge themselves in sin. These to whom the preaching of the cross has been made the power of God, have *the body of sin destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin*, Rom. vi. 6. And they have full security for all necessary communications of grace, for promoting their sanctification. The holy habit, or principle of grace in the heart, is like a seed sown in the earth, which requires frequent waterings, in order to its growing up to perfection. The promises of God's covenant secure *a plentiful rain, to confirm his inheritance when it is weary*. The believer's heart is the garden of God, to which that promise refers, Isa. xxvii. 3. *I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment*. These spiritual showers from above make the believer's progress in holiness to advance, and to become more visible and ornamental to religion, Hos. xiv. 4, 5, 6.

5. In the last place, These to whom the preaching of the cross is the power of God, may be said to be *saved*, in respect of the absolute assurance of their complete and everlasting salvation. They are actually

ally saved already, but their salvation is not complete in time. *It doth not yet appear what they shall be.* But as they are presently saved, in being regenerated, justified, adopted, and sanctified; so all this is in order to their being *glorified*. Rom. viii. 29, 30. Their perfect salvation at last is as certain, as if it were already enjoyed by them. *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.* The purpose of God, which *shall stand*, affords the most infallible security for this. He *chose* them *unto salvation*, and *ordained* them *unto eternal life*, 2 Thess. ii. 13. Acts xiii. 48. This is the substance of all the great and precious promises of the Everlasting Covenant. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.* He *bath* it in the commencement and earnest of it: and he shall have it in its most glorious perfection for ever. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* Now, God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: *bath he said, and shall he not do it? or bath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* The perfection of salvation in the heavenly state was one of the special ends of the cross of Christ. He suffered to the uttermost, that he might be *able to save to the uttermost*. *It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* The holy Spirit, which they are endued with in their effectual calling, is a sure earnest and seal of complete salvation, Eph. i. 13, 14. and iv. 30. The gracious work of God, in and about his people, will not be perfect, until they are wholly brought to glory. But *he is a rock, and his work is perfect*; and therefore, they may be confident

dent of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 6. They may exult in the infallible prospect of complete salvation, in a state of eternal glory. By Jesus Christ we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, Rom. v. 2.

It remains that we add a few inferences for the improvement of this subject.

1. We may learn, that the gospel, which is here called *the preaching of the cross*, is unspeakably valuable. It is the greatest of all external blessings. *Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us.* By means of it we know, that *the Lord hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David.* The voice of rejoicing and salvation never would have been heard in the tabernacles of the sons of men, if God had not proclaimed *peace on earth, and good will towards them.* Let Christians consider *the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty*, and learn to be thankful for the dispensation of the gospel. How valuable is it, considered as the great mean, by which God's power is exercised in the salvation of men?

2. Hence see, a glorious manifestation of divine sovereignty, in the application of salvation, by the instrumentality of the gospel. The divine Redeemer is the Author of salvation. As the purchase of it was made by the price which he paid, so the application of it depends wholly upon the power which he exerts. Though great multitudes of men enjoy *the preaching of the cross*, yet how different are its effects

effects upon them? To some it is *foolishness*, and to others it is *the power of God*. The Lord exercises his power sovereignly, according to his own good pleasure. We find Jesus, in his estate of humiliation, adoring the sovereignty of God, in this dispensation. Luke x. 21. *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for it so seemed good in thy sight.* In this manner God proceeds still, under the dispensation of the gospel. His own sovereign will is the rule of his gracious operations in the church. *The Son quickeneth whom he will*, John v. 21. The gospel does not take saving effect upon any man, because of some previous goodness about him more than about another. The infinite God can be indebted to none. *He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.*

3. Hence see, a special part of that saving experience which all true Christians are made partakers of. They have experience of *the preaching of the cross* being *the power of God* unto them. *Our gospel came not unto you, Christians, in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.* The doctrine of the cross hath not only instructed your natural understandings, so as to enable you to talk about Christ, and about the way of salvation through him; but the power of God, attending that doctrine, hath enlightened, renewed, and sanctified your hearts. It has subdued your natural opposition to the cross of Christ, and inclined you to embrace it alone for salvation. Where persons have

no such experience and exercise, there is too much reason to fear, that to them *our preaching* has been vain, and that *they are yet in their sins*.

4. We may infer, that these who have had experience of the power of God attending *the preaching of the cross* have abundant matter of praise and thankfulness. Is it not matter of praise, that you have not been left to continue despisers of it? You were enemies to it, even as others, when the arm of the Lord was stretched out, to subdue you to the obedience of faith. You are now happy persons indeed, for you are *saved*. By faith in the cross of Christ, you are delivered from all your guilt, from the reigning power and dominion of sin, from all the dreadful consequences of it, and from all hazard of perishing for ever. Jesus hath said, *They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand*. You are the objects of God's special love and care. You shall have his gracious presence in life, and in death, and shall be ever with him hereafter. When those, who finally reject the Saviour, and condemn his cross, shall *go away into everlasting punishment*, you shall be raised to *life eternal*. And since you are no better, by nature, than *them that perish*, should you not be admiring the sovereignty, freedom, and power of the grace of God towards you? *Let your mouths be filled with his praise, and with his honour all the day*. He hath saved you for his name's sake, and it becomes you to be ascribing to him all the praise, saying, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake*.

5. This subject gives us ground to hope for the further success of the gospel. Has the preaching of

the cross of Jesus proved to be *the power of God* to some in every preceding, as well as in the present, age; may we not be assured, that it will prove to be so in all ages to come? *Is the Lord's hand shortened at all, that it cannot save?* The succession of true believers in the church is uninterrupted. *One generation shall praise God's works to another, and shall declare his mighty acts.* As some are daily taken home to Christ's Father's house, where there are many mansions, so others are brought in by the power of God to fill their room in the church below. That day will never dawn, in which the face of the visible church will be covered with gospel-despisers only, or with persons who reckon *the preaching of the cross foolishness*. The number of these may be often, indeed, very great; but there never shall be a total suspension of divine influences, so as that none will believe on Christ crucified. There is not a greater reality in the constant exertion of his power for upholding all things, as the God of nature, than there is in the unceasing operations of his gracious power, by means of his word and ordinances. *My Father worketh hitherto, said Christ, and I work.* He says so still. *I will work, and who shall let it?* Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring. Therefore, while *the preaching of the cross* is maintained, there is reason to hope, that it shall be *the power of God* unto some. *The election* shall obtain, although *the rest* be blinded. And when *this gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world, (and it will yet be so, let modern infidels propose and attempt what they will), glorious will the displays of divine power be, which shall accompany it. Psa. cx. 2, 3. Isa. lx. 1. &c.

We exhort you all to betake yourselves to Jesus Christ, who is mighty to save the chief of sinners, in virtue of his own satisfaction and righteousness. Are you ready to perish under a load of sin and wrath? They are persons in that dreadful state, to whom he gives the benefit of his cross. *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*—Seek experience of his power by the gospel, for inclining and enabling you to the exercise of *faith in his blood*. In this way, and in no other, you shall have redemption and complete salvation.—Let those, who can say with Paul, *Unto us which are saved it is the power of God*, be exhorted, to trust in God's power for carrying on their salvation unto perfection.—Study to improve the preaching of the cross for promoting your sanctification. Jesus Christ *sanctifies and cleanses* his people *by the word*.—Give evidence that ye are saved, by a holy conversation and deportment in the world. The Lord *hath not called you unto uncleanness, but unto holiness*.—Be concerned about the success of the gospel of Christ. That it is *foolishness* to many will be matter of sorrow to you, considering the dishonour done to Christ by these men, and the injury which they do to themselves. But the promise of God, securing the blessed effects of the gospel to some, affords great encouragement to pray for this. If it has been, indeed, *the power of God* to you, it is impossible that you should not pray for its being the same to others. You will partake of that spirit, which breathes in the truly benevolent wish expressed by Paul, when standing before Agrippa. *I would to God*, said he, *that not only thou, but also all that bear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am*, Acts xxvi. 29.

S E R M O N V.

CHRIST IS THE KING OF THE CHURCH BY
HIS FATHER'S APPOINTMENT*.

PSALM ii. 6.

Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is invested with a three-fold office, as Mediator. He is the Prophet, Priest, and King of his church. We have this day been commemorating his death, by which, as the great High Priest of our profession, he completed the atonement for sin. We have seen him, as *set forth crucified* for us. He was brought very low in our stead. He had to die upon a cross, under the frowns of heaven, and amidst the rage of men and devils. But we are also to consider him as *a priest upon his throne*. He who is *the Priest of the Most High God*, is also the *King of Righteousness*. He is exalted to the throne in his mediatory capacity, and invested with all glorious dominion, power, and authority. Though he was once humbled, he is now *exalted, and extolled, and very high*. He is *made higher than the kings of the earth*, being raised to a place over the church, which no creature is able to fill. And hence

* This sermon was preached on a Sabbath evening immediately after the dispensation of the sacrament of our Lord's Supper.

hence JEHOVAH says in this text, *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.*

Though we are not told here by whom this psalm was penned, yet we learn from Acts iv. 25. that God spake it to the church, *by the mouth of his servant David.* The Spirit of God, who is the best interpreter of his own word, also gives us positive instruction about whom and what it applies unto. David and his kingdom were but faint types of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. The psalm seems to have a primary and chief reference to the antitype. There are several parts of it which will by no means apply to the type. Particularly, what is expressed in verse 7th could never be applicable to David; for to none of the angels, high and glorious as they are, did God say at any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, Heb. i. 5. And the promise in verse 8th belongs properly to Christ alone. *I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*

In the first three verses of the psalm, we have an account of the almost universal opposition made to the kingdom and interest of Jesus Christ in the world. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* This was prophetic of the great opposition that should be made to Christ, and to the spreading of the gospel, in the beginning of the New Testament day. Thus we find it applied by the apostles, in Acts iv. 25,—27. It is, however, descriptive of the general and lasting enmity of the world against

Christ and his church. The opposition is here represented as very formidable. It is made by *the people* in general, with *the kings and rulers* at their head. Kings and people, and kings between themselves, seem often to have very different views, and different interests, as to temporal things: but there has been, ordinarily, a most ungodly sameness of opinion, and a joint co-operation among them, against the interests of Jesus Christ. Herod and Pilate differed widely, and were even *at enmity between themselves* about some things, but they were united in their opposition to *the Lord of glory*.—We are also told, that the enemies of God, and of his Anointed, use both violence and craft, to render their opposition successful. *Why do the heathen rage?* The world's enmity against Christ has been evidenced by the most avowed rage against his name and followers. It has been carried to dreadful lengths of most unrelenting fury, so as to stain the earth with the blood of the saints. But Christ's enemies are crafty as well as cruel. *They take counsel together*, that they may unite their skill, in planning the most promising schemes to render their opposition successful. They study to assist, encourage, and support one another in it. *They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones*.—We are here also informed of the cause of that opposition. If it is inquired, What aileth the kings, and the rulers, and the people, at the Lord and his Anointed? What provokes them thus to rage, and to *take counsel against* them? The answer is suggested in verse 3d. They cannot endure the laws of Christ. They cannot think of submitting to his royal power, nor of being governed by

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his authority. *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* Though Christ's yoke is easy in itself, and his burden light, yet his yoke is galling, and his burden heavy, to a carnal world. The reason of this is given by the apostle, in Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* Were the laws of Christ to allow men to walk according to the course of this world, in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, they would be much more popular. But since they are calculated, to level human pride, to restrain sin, to exalt the glory of God, and to promote holiness, spirituality, and heavenly mindedness, they cannot be acceptable to men, who wish their corrupt appetites and passions to be under no controul.—We may observe here also, how unsuccessful and foolish, as well as wicked, this opposition to Christ is. Why do the people imagine a vain thing? They contrive and attempt what they are, by no means, able to accomplish. Their opposition is both vain and wicked, because it is *against the LORD, and his Anointed One.* Hatred of Christ and his interests flows from enmity against God. *They, said Christ, have hated both me and my Father.* Now, how vain must it be for the worms of the earth to set themselves against the God who made them? *Woe unto him that strive with his Maker.*

Accordingly, in verses 4th and 5th, we have a representation of the holy contempt and indignation, with which God views all the opposition made to him, and his interests in the church. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,*

wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. God views all the attacks of devils and men upon the kingdom of his dear Son as foolish and despicable. They are often very formidable in the eyes of his people, but they do not disturb his divine and eternal rest, nor create any uneasiness in his infinite mind. He sits in the heavens, and laughs at the feeble and foolish attempts of men. He does not, however, view their opposition with indifference; for he speaks to them in wrathful threatenings, and he will speak to them in wrathful dispensations. He will vex them,—he will confound and consume them—in his sore displeasure. Evil shall slay the wicked. God is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath banded himself against him, and hath prospered?

Our text contains language of defiance to all the enmity and rage of Christ's enemies. *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.*—The Speaker here is God the Father. He is that LORD or JEHOVAH, who is mentioned, in verse 4th, as *having* all his enemies *in derision*.—The person of whom he speaks is *his King*. He is the same who is called *his Anointed* in verse 2d. That this is Jesus Christ, appears from the application made of the passage in Acts iv. 25, which we formerly referred you unto. He is constituted a King by his Father's appointment, and is, therefore, invested with all regal power and authority. *All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth.*—He is said to be *set upon his holy hill of Zion*. Zion was a name given to the Old Testament church, and was derived from the place where the holy city and temple were built. This was a hill, where the Jebusites had a fort, from which they attempted to resist David's government, when

when he came up to Jerusalem from Hebron, as you may find in 2 Sam. v. We are there told, that *David took the strong-hold of Zion, the same is the city of David*. It is called the *holy hill of Zion*, because the temple, the place of worship, in which the symbols of God's presence were, was afterwards built there: It is thought, that the hill Zion was divided into two heads, and that the city or castle of David was built upon the one, and the temple upon the other. Thus it came to be called *the holy mountain*, because it was the seat of divine ordinances, and the place concerning which the Lord said, *My name shall be there*. The name is given to the city of Jerusalem, and to the whole of the Old Testament church in general, Psal. xlviii. 2. and lxxxvii. 5. By the *holy hill of Zion*, we are still to understand the church of God among the Gentiles, which is as much *his holy hill*, as that which he once had among the Jews. And accordingly, we find the name *Zion* transferred from the Old to the New Testament church. In the 60th chapter of Isaiah, we have a prophecy which expressly refers to the erection and enlargement of the church of God among the Gentiles: And, in verse 14th, it is said, *They shall call thee the City of the LORD, the Zion of the holy One of Israel*. Says the apostle, Heb. xii. 22. *Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God*. And the witnesses for Christ, in New Testament times, are represented as standing upon *the mount Sion with the Lamb*, Rev. xiv. 1.—Thus the church of God is still *his holy hill of Zion*. This is the kingdom over which our Lord Jesus Christ is set, and still bears all rule; for *the government shall be*.

be upon his shoulder. Yet have I, saith JEHOVAH, set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

In discoursing upon this subject, we shall

- I. Observe a few things concerning Christ's kingdom, which is here called *God's holy hill of Zion*;
- II. Speak of Christ, as the King, who is set on this *holy hill*;
- III. Mention some things imported in God's declaration, *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*; and afterwards add the improvement.—We are,

I. To observe a few things concerning Christ's kingdom, which is here called *God's holy hill of Zion*.

i. That the whole form and order of this kingdom are divine. All the laws and ordinances of the Old Testament church were of divine institution. *The Lord was her Judge, her Lawgiver, and her King.* We find frequent mention made of *the laws, statutes, and ordinances*, which God gave to his people Israel. He commanded the strictest observation of *all the laws of his house*. Ezek. xliii. 10, *Son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel;—shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof,—and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.* If at any time they trampled upon these, or obtruded alterations and inventions of their own upon them, they incurred his high displeasure, Isa. xxiv.

5, 6. *The earth (or, the land) is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth.*

It is equally true, that the whole frame of the New Testament Zion is divine. Men are not left to fashion and model Christ's kingdom as they please. It is at their peril, if they attempt to form it, according to the plans of earthly kingdoms, or as may best suit the corrupt wishes and secular interests of the princes of this world. The law, by which the subjects of Christ's kingdom are to be regulated, both as to their faith and practice, is the word of the living God, Isa. viii. 20. *To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* This law shows them what homage of faith, worship, and obedience, is due from them to their glorious King, and also what duties they owe to one another, as fellow subjects of his kingdom. The gospel, by which Christ graciously rules among his people, contains the most substantial and comfortable matter for their faith; and the moral law, as a rule of righteousness in his hand, is a proper directory for their practice and conversation. *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.* All the ordinances, in which the citizens of Zion are to worship their King, have the stamp of his authority. No human modes of worship, whatever *fair shew* of devotion they may have, are to be added to his institutions, or put in the place of them. *In vain do they worship him, who teach for doctrines the commandments of men.* The inferior officers in Zion, together with the visible

sible form of government therein, are fixed by his appointment. *He gave apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, endued with extraordinary gifts; and he gave also ordinary pastors and teachers, belps, and governments, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,* Eph. iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. xii. 28. To suppose that he hath authorised no particular form of government for his New Testament Zion, is to impeach his fidelity and love, as if he were more careless about his church now than formerly, and less faithful in his house as a Son, than was Moses as a servant. He is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all churches of the saints,

2. That Zion, or the kingdom of Christ, is of a spiritual nature. It is entirely different from the kingdoms of this world, and absolutely independent of them. Our blessed Lord declared this, in the plainest language, when standing before Pilate's judgment seat, John xviii. 36. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.* He does not deny, that it was in the world. It always has had a place in it, since the Lord at first founded Zion, and it shall ever have a place in it, while there is a world, in spite of the united powers of hell and earth. All the true subjects of it are gathered out of the world; and Christ is commissioned to rule in the midst of his enemies, for that purpose, Psal. cx. 2, 3. But his kingdom does not originate from this world. Worldly wisdom and power, neither gave a beginning to it, nor have ever contributed, directly, to its advancement and prosperity. *My kingdom, says Christ, is not from hence.* It is not a worldly and temporal, but a heavenly and everlasting throne, on which the

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King fits, Psal. cx. 1. The sceptre of his kingdom is not a material, but a spiritual rod, Psal. cx. 2. Isa. ii. 3. The laws of it are spiritual, and are calculated, not only for regulating the visible conduct, but also the internal exercise of the subjects. The homage due to the King does not consist chiefly in bodily service, but in spiritual and holy exercise. *God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* Earthly governments are constructed with a design (at least, it is always their ostensible design) to promote the external and temporal advantage of mankind: but Christ's government, as King in Zion, has a special respect to men's spiritual and eternal welfare. He reigns for their salvation, Isa. xxxiii. 22. The blessings promised to his subjects, are not temporal advantages and honours, but spiritual and heavenly good things, such as righteousness, pardon, adoption, holiness, and eternal life. The means of supporting his kingdom, and exercising his royal administration in it, are not of the world. His kingdom never was, and never will be promoted by fire and sword. *If, says he, my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,—but now is my kingdom not from hence.* 2 Cor. x. 4. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.*

Nor is Christ's kingdom, in any respect, inimical to the lawful exercise of civil power and authority in the kingdoms of this world. *The kings of the earth* have no reason to set themselves against it, on this account. It does not interfere with their managements, nor encroach upon their just prerogatives. The glorious King of Zion enjoined his followers to be *subject to the higher powers*, though these powers did not belong to his kingdom. And this command

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is still binding upon the citizens of Zion, in so far as their subjection to earthly kings is consistent with their loyalty and duty to him. While the kingdom of Christ, therefore, does not intromit with, nor oppose, civil power, so far as it is occupied in promoting the common and outward advantage of mankind; it is no less evident, that earthly kings and princes ought not to interfere with Christ's kingdom, farther than by demeaning themselves as good subjects of it, by a profession and conversation, agreeable to the laws of Zion.

3. That Christ's kingdom is an holy kingdom. It is here called *God's holy hill of Zion*. This does not mean, that the hill of Zion was holy inherently, more than the neighbouring hills. It was considered as holy relatively, because of *the ark of God*, which, for a time, *dwelt within curtains* there, and because the temple was afterwards built upon it. It was called *God's holy mountain*, because his dwelling place was there. *Ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.* The New Testament church is spoken of under the same designation, as appears from various parts of the prophetic writings, particularly from Isa. lxxv. 25. and xxvii. 13. There is an eminent display made of the divine holiness in the church. The Lord dwells there, as *the holy One of Israel in the midst* of her, Isa. xii. 6. His holiness shines with transcending lustre in the method of salvation, which is revealed in Zion. He manifests his deep abhorrence of sin, in all the threatenings of his word, but especially in the punishment inflicted against it in the cross of Christ.

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The whole revelation made of himself strikes against sin. Not only are his justice and wrath, but his love and grace through Christ to sinners are in opposition to it. All the doctrines, promises, precepts, and threatenings of his word, manifest his infinite holiness, and, consequently, that *he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity*. Holiness is inscribed upon all the truths, ordinances, and laws of Zion, and they are all calculated to enforce and promote holiness among his people. True holiness is required of all the subjects of his kingdom. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy*. This is an infallible mark of all the children of Zion, and a special badge of distinction between them and others. *They shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord*, Isa. lxii. 12. They are to devote themselves to God in holiness, to be (as the Scripture phraseth it) *Holiness unto the Lord*, Jer. ii. 3. They are bound to evidence holy dispositions, by an universal hatred of, and departure from, evil, and by a constant respect to all his commandments. They are to study holiness of heart and exercise, when they are employed in giving him the homage of their religious services. *O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*. And from his throne, as King of Zion, our Lord Jesus Christ dispenses unto his subjects all that holiness which is required. They have it not naturally, more than others. But, when he conquers them by his grace, he makes them holy. He is *made of God unto them sanctification*. And it belongs chiefly to the exercise of his kingly office, to destroy their corruption, and communicate all necessary grace unto them,

for beginning and advancing their conformity to himself. Thus he says in Isa. xliii. 21: *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.* All his true subjects are, in this manner, made holy in heart and life. It must, therefore, follow, that a loose and untender practice, as it is a threwd sign of an impure heart, is utterly inconsistent with the character of his people. He considers persons of this description as rebels against his authority, and disclaims them as subjects. Psal. l. 16, 17. *Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.*

4. That the *holy hill of Zion* hath many enemies. One may justly wonder at this, considering what hath been already observed concerning it. The kingdom of Christ is no way hostile, or contrary, to the true interests of men. And, on the other hand, it is most eligible and advantageous to be subjects in it. It has, nevertheless, been a militant kingdom, ever since it was erected on the earth. It is hostile to Satan. It is founded upon the destruction of his kingdom, in so far as the subjects of Christ are a *spoil* taken from that grand adversary of God and man, according to that promise in Isa. liii. 12. *I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death.* The devil, consequently, has proved to be a most inveterate enemy to Christ and his kingdom, in all ages. As far as he has been permitted, he has tried every stratagem, and used every effort, to prevent its progress and prosperity, and, if it were possible, to overturn it altogether. Persecutions.

tions, heresies, delusions, corruptions, temptations, and the whole artillery of hell, have been playing against God's *holy mountain*. Though it is a kingdom of peace, yet it hath ever been the seat of an unabating war. Says John, *There was war in heaven*,—in the heaven of the militant church; *Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not*, Rev. xii. 7, 8. We see also, from the beginning of this Psalm, how much Christ and his kingdom have been opposed by the men of this world. Men of every station and condition of life, from the courtier down to the clown, have united in this opposition. *The heathen rage; the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed*. Since the world began, it has very rarely happened, that the great people of the earth have been friendly to the purity and power of godliness. The preservation of Christ's kingdom is, by no means, owing to any remarkable countenance and support, which it hath had from the kings of the earth. Worldly power and policy have been mostly at war with the *Lord's Anointed*. And, besides its more open and avowed enemies, the kingdom of Christ hath had to grapple with a multitude of internal foes. Erroneous, corrupt, and licentious ministers and church members have done much injury to it. Often has Zion had to complain, *Mine enemies are those of mine own house*.

5. That the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is safe amidst all opposition. The city of our New Testament David is well fortified. The inhabitants may sing this song, *We have a strong city; salvation*

will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. They may call *their walls salvation, and their gates praise*, Isa. xxvi. 1. and lx. 18. All divine perfections secure the safety and preservation of the church. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever.* JEHOVAH is a wall of fire round about Zion, to protect her from every external foe, and he is in the midst of her, to advance his work of glorious grace among her citizens, Psal. xlv. 5. Zech. ix. 8. His love, his promise, and his oath to Jesus Christ, render her absolutely safe. Psal. lxxxix. 35, 36. *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.* Has the church legions of infernal enemies to oppose her? She has also thousands of angels strong to guard and protect her. They are *ministring spirits* to the church, and to particular church members. John beheld them *surrounding the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders*,—that is, both the ministers and members of the church; and he informs us, that *the number of these angelical guards was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*, Rev. v. 11. We learn from 2 Kings vi. 17. how well a single prophet of the Lord was guarded in a time of danger. The angels are *the hosts of JEHOVAH*, attending continually upon this very thing. The kingdom of Christ is, therefore, absolutely safe at all times, however *troublous some times* may be. His *church is built upon himself, the rock of ages, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

6. In fine, the kingdom of Christ is to be greatly extended. It was once confined to the typical Zion.

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None were owned as subjects of it, or enjoyed the privileges of it, but *the seed of Abraham, God's friend*, with the exception of a very few proselytes. At length, however, *the middle wall of partition was broken down, the law went forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem*, and it had free course, and was glorified among the Gentile nations. *The kingdoms of this world, over which Satan had long presided, became the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.* But a much greater enlargement of his kingdom is to be expected to take place in the latter days; according to the promise in the 8th verse of this psalm. *Ask of me, says JEHOVAH the Father to the Mediator, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* What a glorious time will that be, when the New Testament Zion,—the spiritual and independent kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be reared upon the ruins of all the Popish, Mahometan, and Pagan kingdoms? THE LORD and his ANOINTED ONE are infinitely able to do this in their own time, and will never forget their promise to that effect, Dan. ii. 44. *In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*—We proceed,

II. To speak of Christ, as the *King*, who is *set on the holy hill of Zion*.

1. He is Zion's only King and Head. God never did, and never will, exalt any other to this dignity. There is a succession of kings in earthly kingdoms.

doms. Death, *that king of terrors*, who has no respect of persons, carries them *the way of all the earth*. They leave their thrones vacant, to be possessed by others. But Christ ever was, and will be, the King of Zion. He is, eminently, *God's King*. *Yet have I set my King*, says JEHOVAH, mine only King, *upon my holy hill of Zion*. He has no equal or competitor in his government. He is *the Ruler in Israel*, and *upon his shoulder alone is the government*, Isa. ix. 6. Mic. v. 2. His authority alone is to be acknowledged by the church, as her Supreme Lawgiver. Her language must ever be, *the holy One of Israel is our King*. It is most daring arrogance and presumption for any creature to assume a headship over the church of Christ. Yet how frequently has this been done? The *man of sin* and *son of perdition* has long arrogated universal headship and lordly dominion, pretending to be the Vicar, or visible representative, of Christ, on earth. Secular kings and princes have also been deeply guilty of claiming and assuming to themselves the supremacy over Zion. Sure we are, that this is not the way to make their own crowns sit firm upon their heads. As none can fill Christ's place in the church but himself, so he will allow none to attempt it with impunity. What a violence committed against common sense and reason is it, that a mortal creature, and too often, a profane and irreligious creature, should be declared head of a kingdom, which is, in its nature, spiritual and heavenly? Christ's kingly power and headship in Zion is a part of his *glory which he will not give to another*. Though he is now in heaven, as to his bodily presence, yet he needs no depute to act for him in his church

church below. He is a King, who fills heaven and earth. He is now *set down on the right hand of God*, but he is ever present with that part of his kingdom which is militant. It is the joy and rejoicing of the hearts of his people, that he still says, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

2. That, as King in Zion, Christ hath authority and power over all. We do not say, that his Mediatorial character and government are known among all nations; but he, who is the Mediator, is appointed head over all things. This the apostle testifieth, in Eph. i. 22, 23. *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ—hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.* He hath dominion and power over all things, that he may manage and over-rule them, so as they may be subservient to his own glory, and the benefit of *his body the church.* All power, says he, *is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* He has all power in heaven, over angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. *Angels, and authorities, and powers, are made subject to him.* He has all power in the earth, over all men and things in it. All the kingdoms of this world are in a state of subjection to him, Psal. xxii. 28. *The kingdom,—the whole kingdom of nature and providence is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations.* He orders and disposes of all the confusions and convulsions that take place among them, for the accomplishment of his own gracious purposes about Zion. His universal dominion secures her preservation. Though the nations may be angry, and rage against her, he can make their *wrath to praise him, and the remainder*

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of it he shall restrain. All other power, and might, and dominion, are under his controul, so that he can make the most opposite persons and things subservient to his designs. And this universal power, which belongs to him, will be exercised, in due time, for bringing all the kingdoms of this world under his gracious authority and government, as King of Zion, Dan. vii. 14. *There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

3. That Jesus Christ, the King of Zion, is infinitely equal to the exercise of that office. He is able to discharge every part of the work which belongs to him. He is possessed of the highest excellencies and qualifications for it. A very few of these we shall mention, for illustrating the truth of the observation.

1st, He is the Most High God, and, therefore, necessarily and essentially Supreme, Rom. ix. 5. *Christ—is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* No creature could be placed over Zion, because a creature is not equal to the duties of that station. A creature could not grant pardons, conquer corruptions, renew souls, advance holiness, and bring men to heaven. But Christ, the King of Zion, being the true God, as well as man, is able to do all these things. He is *the King of glory*, Psal. xxiv. 9, 10. All divine glory belongs to him,—glory, not created or communicated, but necessary and essential. He is *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, and, therefore, must be able to do every thing that God can do.

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He is infinitely above all others who are called kings. This is a never-failing ground of rejoicing to all the subjects of his kingdom; Psal. xcvi. 1. *The LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.* For what reason? Among others, it is added, ver. 9. *For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.* The King of Zion is accountable to no creature for what he does, but all creatures are accountable to him. The princes of this world must answer at his bar, for the use of the powers with which they are invested. When they exercise their power for his glory, he can establish their thrones, and keep their crowns in safety. And, on the other hand, if they abuse their power, contrary to his will, he can easily pull them from their thrones, and lay their glory in the dust, Psal. lxxvi. 12. *He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.*

2dly, He is a King, who is possessed of incomparable wisdom and knowledge, Matth. xii. 42. *Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* Solomon's wisdom was nothing compared with his; for *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,* Col. ii. 3. It is not possible that any thing should be dark, intricate, or non-plussing to him. He knows how to overthrow the schemes of his enemies, however deep these may be laid. He can *take the wise in their own craftiness, and carry the counsel of the froward headlong.* The works of darkness are no mystery to him, for he seeth in darkness as well as in the clearest light. *All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Though he is now seated upon the throne of glory in

in human nature, yet he is perfectly well acquainted with all the transactions of this world. The closest hypocrite cannot impose upon him, for *his eyes, which are as a flame of fire*, penetrate through every veil. Nor is he ignorant of, or unattentive unto, the faithfulness and diligence of his true subjects, Rev. ii. 19. He knows all the parts of the divine counsel, and he is wise to accomplish them fully in their own times.

3dly, He is an Almighty King, Rev. i. 8. *I am*, says he, *the Almighty*. Omnipotence is one of his essential attributes, and therefore there is nothing too hard for him. None can withstand him, nor oppose his designs with success. We read of his *working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*, Phil. iii. 21. Whatever, in his infinite wisdom, he hath purposed to do, that he hath full ability to accomplish in his own time. His glorious power hath been very frequently exerted for his people, in surmounting difficulties, which they never could have overcome, and in bringing about events, to the accomplishment of which they could not have contributed. He can easily crush the stoutest of his foes, and turn their most formidable combinations against themselves. The church's Redeemer is mighty, THE LORD OF HOSTS is his name. How often has *his arm been made bare*, and stretched out for her deliverance, when her situation appeared to be truly desperate. *It is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, What he did in the Red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon*. As his power is sometimes exerted, in a judicial manner, for the destruction of the inveterate enemies of his kingdom on the earth, so it has been often exerted, in a gracious manner,

for subduing sinners to his love and obedience. Hence Saul, who once *breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*, was himself made a disciple, yea, an apostle, to *bear the Lord's name to the Gentiles*, and at last died a martyr in the cause of Jesus.

4thly, He is a most righteous King. To the truth of this we have the testimony of God the Father. Compare Psal. xlv. 6, 7. with Heb. i. 8, 9. *Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* He is the *Holy One and the Just*. The statutes and ordinances of his kingdom are just and equitable. *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart. The judgments of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.* All the dispensations of his Providence, whether prosperous or adverse, are most just. He is righteous in all his ways. It is impossible that he should do any wrong, either to the friends, or to the enemies of his kingdom. Heavy and smarting are these rods, with which he sometimes corrects his own people. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous.* Yet they are afflicted in truth and righteousness, and have, on all such occasions, to confess, that *he punisheth them less than their iniquities deserve.* Very dreadful are the plagues which are sometimes brought upon the enemies of his person and kingdom, when he proceeds to *speak to them in his wrath, and to vex them in his hot displeasure.* Yet the heaviest judgments, which they are capable of bearing, can never equal the infinite evil of their

rebellion against him. Awful and alarming was the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, when a torrent of fire and brimstone overthrew these cities with their inhabitants, in the midst of their jovialty and wickedness. But the Lord of providence was righteous in all this, Gen. xviii. 25. His righteousness will be displayed in the regions of despair through eternity, 2 Theff. i. 6. And however variable his visible dispensations toward his church and people may be,—though he may sometimes bless them with prosperity and peace, and at other times he may *break them* *fore in the place of dragons, and cover them with the shadow of death*,—yet, when the mystery of his providence is finished, it will be their eternal employment to ascribe righteousness to him, saying, *Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

5thly, Jesus Christ is truly a good King. *Good and upright is the Lord. He is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.* He has bowels of compassion even towards his enemies. When they continue obstinate, he *weeps over them*, and says, *How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.* He is loath to give up with those who reject him, and who refuse to submit to his government. See with what affecting language he speaks, in Hos. xi. 8. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. He has no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth. And if his compassions flow out towards his enemies, how great must be his tenderness towards his subjects? He is touched with*
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the feeling of their infirmities. In all their affliction; he is afflicted; and what touches them touches the apple of his eye. He is the very best King, in this respect. All his gracious subjects are partakers of his goodness. *The Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.* He provides supply for all their wants. He makes obedience to the laws of his kingdom easy, by affording them all necessary strength for it. *My grace, says he, is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness,* 2 Cor. xii. 9. He covers them with his righteousness; he adorns them with his grace; he directs them by his word and Spirit; when they are in darkness, he enlightens them; when broken in heart, he heals them; when declining, he restores their souls; when stretched on beds of distress, he visits them, and *makes all their bed in their sickness.* When they are grown old and gray-headed in his service, he will not forsake them. And, when their militant course is finished, he will give them that *crown of righteousness and of glory*, which he hath laid up for them, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

6thly, Jesus Christ is an everlasting King. Other kings, though they make a great shew on the earth for a time, yet they must at length *die like men*, and *fall like the princes*, who have gone before them. Death pulls them from their thrones, and lays them on a level with the men who *embrace dunghills*. But JEHOVAH's King upon the holy hill of Zion is *The Father of eternity*, Isa. ix. 6. It is a glorious truth indeed, that he once died, *to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and reconciliation for iniquity*; but it is also a glorious truth, that *he rose again*, and is *alive for evermore*, Amen, Rev. i. 18.

None of the kings of the nations are able to redeem themselves from the power of the grave. Those, who have *destroyed the earth*, while they lived, *cease from troubling*, and lie as silent and motionless in the grave, as *the infant of a span long*. But our Lord Jesus Christ, having *swallowed up death in victory*, it was *not possible that he should be holden of it*. Of him it is *witnessed, that he liveth*. And he lives for ever, as *the King of saints*, Psal. cxlvi. 10. Heb. i. 8.—We shall now proceed,

III. To mention some things imported in God's declaration here; *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*.

1. This imports, that our Lord Jesus Christ was chosen and appointed to this office by the Father. It is on this account that he is called his Anointed, in verse 2. which refers to his being legally invested with, and qualified for his office. From eternity he was chosen and appointed to be the Mediator between God and men. Hence he says, in Prov. viii. 23. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was*. And, as he consecrated him to be a Priest, for making atonement for sin, and purchasing salvation for sinners, so he constituted him a King, for dispensing and applying that salvation.

2. That Christ is intrusted with the whole government of the Church, and with the management of all things in and about her. He is not a mere nominal King, having only the name, without the power; but he is an actual King, and is continually acting and exercising all power of government, in and over the church, Isa. ix. 7. *Of the increase of his government*

government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. All divine management, in and about Zion, is exercised in the person of Christ. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. The Father hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as were given him. And the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, Matth. xxviii. 18. John xvii. 2. and v. 22.

3. That all opposition to Christ's kingdom shall be fruitless and vain. *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion,* says JEHOVAH. These words are to be understood as spoken in contempt and defiance of the enmity and rage of Christ's foes; as if God had said, "*Let the heathen rage; let the kings of the earth and the rulers plot against me and mine anointed One;* yet, in spite of all that they can do, *I have set him upon my holy hill of Zion,* and I will uphold him there. *Mine arm shall strengthen him.* I have established his throne, and made it immovable. I have set him on it, and I have so settled him upon it, that all attempts to shake his throne, or to pull him from it, shall be vain." To the enemies of Christ's kingdom, he says in Isa. viii. 9. *Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand.*

A few inferences shall conclude this discourse.

1. Hence infer, that there is a great difference between Christ's kingdom, and the kingdoms of this world. The *holy hill of Zion* was the chief seat of God's gracious presence upon earth. *The Lord* made choice of *Zion*; he *desired it for his habitation*. *This*, said he, *is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it*, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. The New Testament *Zion* is still *the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*. It is his spiritual kingdom, where he takes up his dwelling in souls. The kings of the earth bear rule over the bodies and estates of men, but Christ's government has a principal respect to their souls. His throne is erected in the heart, Luke xvii. 21.

2. That God claims a special interest in the church, and she is the chief object of his regard in this world. *My holy hill of Zion*, says he. The church is the only society on earth, from which God receives a tribute of active praise. He will, no doubt, glorify himself by all his creatures. *All his works shall praise him*. Even *the wrath of man* shall redound to his honour. But he is most eminently manifested to be *great in Zion, and high above all people*. He is *greatly praised in the mountain of his holiness*. He will, therefore, have his kingdom in the church preserved, though it were at the expence of all other kingdoms, Isa. xliii. 3, 4. *I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life*.

3. That we owe great homage to Christ, as the King of Zion. We are to acknowledge him, and

no other, as her King, and as our King. We are to submit to his will,—to his will of grace, as our Saviour, and to his perceptive will, as our Lawgiver, Isa. xxxiii. 22. We are to consider him, as invested with the highest authority and power, and as constantly employed in the exercise thereof. His regal government is never under any suspension. He is not set over a kingdom, as to which he is a mere spectator, but he is continually employed in managing all the concerns of Zion. As Mediator, he is *on the right hand of power*. He is Almighty, for *doing all his pleasure*.

4. That the people of God have good reason for bearing testimony in behalf of Christ's kingly power and prerogatives. He is God's King, and he is the only King of Zion. Those who assume a headship over his church, are attempting to commit a robbery upon him. The church of Christ cannot have two heads. None may assume with safety, therefore, that which belongs only to him. His subjects must display their loyalty to him, by asserting his sole right to reign and rule in his own church.

5. This subject affords abundant matter of comfort, especially in the present times. The interests of Christ's kingdom in the church are in a very deplorable state. But Christ's commission, as God's King, secures a glorious revival and restoration thereof in due time. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time will come. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory*, Psal. cii. 13. 16. It affords comfort to the saints, who may be complaining of the low state of Christ's kingdom in their souls. However much their spiritual enemies may prevail, they

they shall be brought down. God will yet *arise*, and his enemies shall be scattered. Behold thy King cometh, believer; he is just, and having salvation.

We exhort you all to submit yourselves to Jesus Christ, as your King, in the way of submitting to him, as THE LORD YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. You must first have the benefit of his oblation and satisfaction, as a Priest, before you can pay any suitable homage to him, as King of Zion. You must be made righteous, in order to your being obedient.—Lay to heart your danger, should you continue without Christ. He will detect all the concealed enemies of his person and mediation. His hand shall find out all his enemies: his right hand shall find out those that hate him. He shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of his anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.—Let the people of God rejoice in Christ Jesus. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, Psal. cxlix. 2. Let them glory in his love, his wisdom, his power, his watchfulness and care about all the concerns of his kingdom in the church, and in the hearts of men.—Be earnest about the prosperity of his kingdom, and the flourishing of his crown. Plead the promises of the new covenant to that effect; such as that in Psal. cxxxii. 18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.*—Be much employed in prayer. The King of Zion is ever ready to hear, and to grant, the petitions of his subjects. And prayers put up on the behalf of Zion are most acceptable unto him. *They shall prosper that love her.* Pray that he may more eminently take to him his great power, and reign, and that his kingdom may

may extend through all the earth.—Give him the homage that belongs to him. He has an indisputable right to all the homage of your faith and obedience.—Finally, amidst all the opposition made to the true interests of his kingdom, comfort yourselves with the words of JEHOVAH in this text; *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.*

S E R M O N VI.

CHRIST IS THE GOVERNOR AMONG THE
NATIONS.

PSALM xxii. 28.

—*He is the Governor among the nations.*

THE Spirit of God, by Solomon, observes, that *there is a time of war, and a time of peace.* This holds true, both with respect to the church of God, and to the nations of this world. In one age the church may be pretty much united, in point of a holy profession, conversation, and affection; and in another age, she may be greatly divided, and splintered into a variety of parts. At one time, she lives in peace, and has no violent opposition made unto her; and at another time, she is persecuted, *afflicted, and tossed with tempests.* It is so with the nations of this world also. Though, to speak truly, they are never in a state of genuine affection and regard for
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one another, yet sometimes they enjoy peace, in so far as peace is meant of a suspension of actual hostilities against one another. But at other times, they are involved in the most bloody contention. *Wars, and rumours of wars, abound. Nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Upon the earth there is distress of nations, with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.* In such a time, however, the people of God have no reason for slavish fear, or uneasy care. *When ye hear of wars and commotions,* said Christ to his disciples, *be not terrified,* Luke xxi. 9. There is a sufficient antidote against such fears, and a strong incentive to faith and joy, in the text before us. *The King of the church is the Governor among the nations.*

We are not left to hesitate, for one moment, about whom this psalm refers unto. Various parts of it are expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament Scriptures. Some parts of it will apply to no other. The first verse contains his complaint upon the cross, when he was under the hiding of God's countenance, and had a painful sense of his vindictive wrath. *My God, my God,* said he, *why hast thou forsaken me?* We have a description of various circumstances which attended his death; such as, the *dividing of his garments* by the soldiers, and their *casting lots for his vesture*,—his seamless coat, and their *piercing his hands and feet.*

The latter part of the psalm refers, evidently, to the future exaltation and glory of Christ. Because he would become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God the Father promised to exalt him, and give him a name which is above every name.

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Christ hath always been glorified on the earth by some, since he was first revealed to men. The *beginning* was *small*, and continued to be so for a number of ages; but, towards the end of the world, it *shall greatly increase*. The exaltation and glory of Christ on the earth, have been like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, which at first *were to the ankles*, then *to the knees*, at length *to the loins*, and at last, they were so much *risen*, as to be *waters to swim in*, a *river that could not be passed over*, Ezek. xlvii. 1.—5. In like manner, the revelation of Christ, and the advancement of the glory of God thereby, have been gradual, as to the spreading of religion through the world. At length, it shall be extended through all the earth, according to the preceding verse of this psalm. *All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee*. This opens up a very glorious prospect unto the church. Her Redeemer has been known and acknowledged by very few comparatively. It is her desire that he should be served and adored by all. Well, says JEHOVAH, *All the ends of the world shall turn to the LORD, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before THEE*, that is, before Christ. They shall prostrate themselves before his throne, acknowledging him in all the glory of his divine and mediatory characters. They shall *honour the Son*, and, in this way, they shall *honour* a Three-one God in him. And this is agreeable to what the apostle says in Phil. ii. 10.—*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*.

Now this will be a blessed,—a most desirable event. But how are we assured that it shall take place, amidst all the confusions upon the earth, and the

the opposition to religion which obtains? This question is answered in the verse before us. *For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the Governor among the nations.*

We understand this as teaching us, that the kingdom of Providence, as well as the kingdom of Grace, belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he is constituted Governor over all the earth, for the important purpose of promoting the glory of God, and the good of Zion. Hence says the apostle in Eph. i. 22, 23. *He hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.* And Christ himself says, that the Father hath given him power over all flesh, and hath committed all judgment unto him, John xvii. 2. and v. 22. God, in this respect, hath accomplished his promise unto him, which we find in Psal. lxxxix. 27. *I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.* They bear rule over a nation; or, if their ambition and power can reach it, they may have two or more nations under their dominion. But, says God, *I will make him higher than them all, for He is the Governor among the nations.*—We shall,

I. Make a few observations concerning *the nations.*

II. Speak of Christ, as *the Governor among the nations*; and then, conclude the discourse with a few inferences.—We are,

I. To make some observations concerning the nations.

1. That they are all originally on a level. Acts xvii. 26. *God hath made of one blood all nations of men,*

men, for to dwell on the face of the earth. That revelation, which tells us, that *all things are of God*, also tells us, that all men are sprung from one man, and one woman. God immediately created one pair only, and from them all succeeding generations were to proceed, Gen. i. 27, 28. Men of all nations are equal, as having the very same nature common to them all. Their visible and mortal part is formed of the same kind of matter. The bodies of all men, of every country, and in every station, are but pieces of clay modified by divine power. To the highest, as well as to the lowest, the description of human kind, which is given by Eliphaz, is applicable. Job iv. 19. *Them that dwell in houses of clay, whose habitation is in the dust.* All men are originally alike as to their souls. Human beings of every nation are distinguished from the rest of the lower creation, in being possessed of immortal souls. And the soul of one man, as it is God's creature, cannot be more or less valuable than the soul of another. They are equally immortal, and are endowed with the same specific powers and faculties considered as in their original state. It is also to be attended unto, that all nations are equally concerned in the federal representation and fall of the first Adam. He did not represent his immediate offspring only, but his offspring to the remotest age. He did not represent Jews or Christians only, who have had, or who still have, supernatural revelation, but he represented all men of every nation, and of every age. And all nations have felt the sad consequences of his sin, in breaking the first covenant. Rom. v. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and*

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so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.
 1 Cor. xv. 22. *In Adam all die.*

If men of all nations are thus originally on a level, how foolish and unreasonable are national prejudices? It is too common to hate and despise fellow men, for no other reason, than that they have been born in another country, and, perhaps, are people of another colour than we are. This must be sinful and foolish, considering that the same kind of blood, which runs in the veins of a Briton, also runs in the veins of any other European; and the blood of Europeans is not more valuable or precious than that of Africans, or of those in the other quarters of the world. We may all unite in speaking the prophet's language, in Mal. ii. 10. *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?*

2. That there is an order and concurrence of divine providence, in the division of mankind into nations. This also appears from the passage before cited. Acts xvii. 26. *God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.* Every individual of the human family has a time and place appointed for him. He is born at the time fixed in the divine purpose, and he has a place allotted for him,—a place bounded by the divine purpose, so that he must be in that place,—must have *his habitation* there, and no where else. But what takes place with individuals, does so also with nations. *The nations—whom he hath made to dwell on all the face of the earth,—he hath determined—the bounds of their habitation.* Though, when the earth began to be peopled, there

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was abundance of room upon its surface, and men were left at liberty, in a great measure, to choose what part of it they pleased to fix their habitation upon; yet this did not leave ground to suppose, that there was no appointment of God, nor concurrence of his providence, in laying out *the bounds of their habitation*. It is said in Psal. cxv. 16. *the earth hath he given to the children of men*. He hath not given it to any one of them, nor to a few only, but hath given it, in certain divisions and proportions, as it pleased him, unto different bodies or societies of men. And these different bodies or societies, living together, either in the islands of the sea, or in distinct parts of the same continent, are ordinarily called nations. These are commonly distinguished from one another by the natural situation of the countries possessed by them, which also differ from one another, in respect of their climate, soil, and the various natural productions which may be peculiar to them. They are not unfrequently distinguished also by language, customs, and a joint interest, or common-weal, the preservation of which it is natural and proper for all the members of the community to endeavour. That portion of the earth, which God hath given to any people, is to be considered as the property of that people. The God, who hath instituted such a thing as private property,—the property of individuals,—hath no less appointed the property of nations, and hath set bounds to it. He hath no less prohibited them from trespassing upon one another, than he hath forbidden individuals to rob and plunder what belongs to another man. He hath *determined the bounds of their habitation*. That is *their inheritance*, which *the Most High* hath *divided unto*

them; and it cannot be torn from them, without attempting to contradict his determination and appointment, Deut. xxxii. 8.

3. The nations are naturally hostile to God, to his worship and service. They are universally guilty of apostacy from God, and are fallen under the dominion of Satan, who, on that account, is called *the god of this world*. Having all descended from one man, and having fallen with him in the breach of the covenant of works, they have lost all their original righteousness, are under the reigning power of natural corruption, and, consequently, are in a state of opposition to God. They are turned away from *the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein*; and they are *walking in their own ways*, Acts xiv. 15, 16. It is an astonishing evidence of divine patience and forbearance, that God hath not utterly cut off and destroyed the nations. *God in times past, saith the apostle, suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. He endured them with much long-suffering, though they were corrupt, and had done abominable iniquity.* To what dreadful degrees of sinning have the nations in general gone, under the power of spiritual darkness? Have they not, contrary to the light of nature, practised the grossest idolatry, by worshipping the sun, the moon, the stars, stocks, stones, and even the vilest of creatures? *The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse, who changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, Rom. i.*

20. 23. Their enmity against God is manifest from their averſion and oppoſition to what may be known of his law by the light of nature. *When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe, having not the law, are a law unto themſelves: which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing; or elſe excuſing, one another,* Rom. ii. 14, 15. Yet, in the nations of this world, the blackeſt crimes have ſometimes been ſanctified, and clothed with the name of virtues. Even among theſe, who have been enlightened by divine revelation, there are many mournful proofs of alienation from, and enmity againſt God. In many nations called *Chriſtian*, ſystems of the moſt dangerous errors, and of the vileſt ſuperſtition and idolatry, are eſtabliſhed and profeſſed, in oppoſition to the evangelical purity of the ordinances of Chriſt.

4. The nations are by nature ignorant of that which is truly good. Their alienation from God flows from their being deſtitute of all right knowledge of him. Hence ſays an apoſtle, in Eph. iv. 17; 18. *The Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind; having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their heart.* When man ſinned, he loſt all proper knowledge of God. Inſtead of becoming more intelligent, as Satan promiſed that he ſhould, his ſpiritual eye was utterly darkened. All his poſterity are born in a ſtate of grievous ignorance of God the chief good, and of the way of being reſtored to the enjoyment of him. Being ignorant of Chriſt, they are neceſſarily deſtitute:

of the knowledge of God, and *without him in the world*; because there is no knowledge of the only true God, without the knowledge of *Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*, John xvii. 3. This further appears from the affecting account given of the natural estate of the nations by the apostle, in Eph. ii. 11, 12. *Remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles, were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* Being without Christ, they can have no good hope through grace. They are ignorant of that which alone can be a portion for the immortal soul. They are *wandering in a wilderness*, with regard to the way of happiness. The course, which all the nations are naturally taking, is the way to destruction, while they have no apprehension of the only way to eternal life. Rom. iii. 16, 17. *Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: and, consequently, there is no fear of God before their eyes.* They are represented as *sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death*. Even many nations, who have been visited by revelation, are in great darkness with respect to the gospel. To them may be applied the words of our blessed Lord; *The light that is in them is darkness, and how great is that darkness?*

5. That the nations are naturally inimical to one another. As they have turned back from God, and are *all gone out of the way*, so they live in malice and envy, are hateful, and hating one another. The nations, in general, are led, in their public and political conduct, by the basest principles of self-interest and covetousness. The divine rule, which di-

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rects us to do to others as we would that they should do to us, has never yet been the standard of behaviour among the nations to one another. Self-interest, which is too much the grand principle with individuals, has had its weight, in influencing the conduct of kingdoms and commonwealths. And when they are become abandoned to all rule of conduct, except what accords with this base principle, it is no wonder, that the greatest disorder, and the most dreadful scenes of injustice, cruelty, and murder, have taken place among them. This woful principle (which is no other than *that covetousness which is idolatry*) hath led nations to seek their own aggrandizement upon the ruin of other states and kingdoms. This appears from that reproof given by the Apostle James, chap. iv. 1, 2. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not from hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. It is this that fills their mouths with cursing and bitterness, and makes their feet swift to shed blood. This, among other things, makes them careless about the lives of one another, and ready to sacrifice them for the most trifling reasons. Hence it is, that amidst the madness of war, the lives of human beings are no more thought of, than these of the fishes of the sea. We have an affecting complaint of a prophet, with respect to this, Hab. i. 13,—17. Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that*
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have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the angle; they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag.—Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

6. That some of the nations have been greatly distinguished from others, by special favours conferred upon them. Though God *bath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth*, and though they are all originally alike before him, yet some of them have enjoyed, and do enjoy singular privileges. He is *the Governor among the nations* in general, but he hath set up and exercised a special and gracious government among some of them, which has not been the privilege of them all. While the greater number of them have been left, in adorable sovereignty, to remain in a state of deep ignorance about God, and the concerns of an eternal state, others of them have been enlightened by the gospel of Christ, and enjoyed spiritual ordinances. This was eminently the case with the Jewish nation. They were chosen of God to be *a peculiar people*. He placed his word and ordinances among them, by the enjoyment of which they were highly dignified above all other nations, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. Thus also have some of the Gentile nations been singularly favoured of the Lord. The light of gospel truth has spread among them who *sat in darkness*. Among these, our own nation is an instance. And indeed there is no nation, among all these who were called *the Gentiles*, that has been more richly favoured with the gospel, than our own, or in which God hath done greater things for supporting and maintaining the gospel standard.

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Among all the nations of Europe, which have been illuminated by the word, ours has been a peculiar object of God's care and goodness. He conferred singular honour upon this nation in the days of our fathers, when he brought them, in a most solemn manner, into a covenant relation unto himself. Though his goodness, in this respect, be sadly forgotten and despised, yet we should ever consider it as our duty and interest to remember the gracious works performed by the Lord in our behalf.—We shall proceed,

II. To speak of Christ, as *the Governor among the nations*. It is a gladdening consideration, while they are in such a state of ignorance, wickedness, and disorder, that he is over them; for *he ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth*.

1. As the Governor among the nations, Christ oversees and observes all that takes place among them. He is qualified by his omniscience to take in, as it were, at one glance, all that obtains among them. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth*, Prov. xv. 3. Zech. iv. 10. Every nation and people, however remote and unknown to us, are ever under his eye, and every individual among them is so. *The dark places of the earth that are full of the habitations of cruelty*, are as much under the observation of Omniscience, as the more enlightened parts of the world. When we behold the nations drenched in wickedness and in blood; when we see *iniquity established by a law*; when we see *kingdom lifting up the sword against kingdom*, on the most unreasonable and frivolous

volous grounds; and when we see the interests both of religion and of humanity neglected by the nations; we may be apt to think, that *God hath forsaken the earth*. It is sometimes hard to reconcile such dark and dismal things in Providence, with the notice which God is declared to take of the affairs of this world. He is, nevertheless, most attentive and observant. *He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves*, Psal. lxxvi. 7. All the kingdoms of this world, in the present times of confusion and distress, are under the eye of this glorious Governor. He is privy to all their counsels and schemes, and is a steady and infallible witness of the whole of their conduct, Amos ix. 8.

2. That Christ, as the Governor among the nations, orders and effectuates all events, of whatever kind, which take place among them. He doth not merely *look on*, but is to be considered as *most active* in every thing that takes place among them. He is fulfilling his own purpose, and *doing according to his own will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*. In the course of his providence, he is disclosing the secrets of his heart, as to all that he had determined to do on the face of the whole earth. Nothing that happens is accidental or unforeseen by him, however unexpectedly many events take place, as to us. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*. We have already said, that, in the course of his providence, he placeth the nations in their several lands and countries. He *determines the bounds of their habitation*, and, fixing the abodes of some in a happier climate and soil, he gives them natural advantages greatly

greatly preferable to these which are enjoyed by others. But it is equally true, that all the occurrences, which take place in and among the nations, are ordered and effectuated by him. They are *the works of the LORD*, and *the operation of his hands*, Psal. xxviii. 5. Isa. v. 12. Though he worketh by means of instruments, which are visible to us, while He, who is the supreme operator, is invisible to flesh and blood, yet his hand is to be seen *working salvation*, and destruction too, *in the midst of the earth*, Psal. lxxiv. 12, 13, 14. Are sinning nations involved in war and blood? Is the earth disturbed with the groans of the wounded, and made fat with the blood of the slain? Are countries depopulated, and turned into uninhabited deserts? Are *cities razed*, and does their *memorial perish with them*? All these are to be considered as *the doing of the LORD*. He exerciseth his government judicially, in taking vengeance on them that dwell upon the earth, on account of their sins. Hence says the church, in Psal. xli. 8. *Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth*. He can easily shake the most stable kingdom to its base, and turn the most populous country into a desolate wilderness. He has only to *speak*, after his own manner, and *it is done*. *At what instant I speak*, says he, *concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy*, Jer. xviii. 7. *He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked*, Isa. xi. 4. At another time; is peace restored unto the nations, and is *the sound of a trumpet*, and *the alarm of war*, no more heard? It is *the Governor of the nations* who brings about the desirable

irable event, Psal. xlv. 9. *He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear asunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*

3. That Christ, the Governor among the nations, over-rules all their counsels and designs, and all the commotions and convulsions among them, to the accomplishment of his own purposes, and the illustration of his own glory. As he hath appointed, according to the counsel of his will, and effectuates by his powerful providence, all the events which, from age to age, take place in the world, so he makes all these to issue in the fulfilment of his own designs. He doth all things for himself. The nations often seem to act, as if there were no God, or as if they were independent of him. *He is not in all their thoughts.* Sometimes they promise themselves peace, prosperity, and happiness, and set adversity and distress at defiance; saying, as Babylon, *I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,* Rev. xviii. 7. At other times they breathe out threatenings and slaughter against neighbouring kingdoms and states, adopting the imperious language of the Egyptian enemy, who said, *I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them,* Exod. xv. 9. But though they seem to act independent of God, yet certain it is, that he worketh by them, and over-rules all their purposes and schemes to his own praise. Christ is always above the nations, and his government among them remains firm and unshaken, amidst all the turmoils and convulsions which take place, Psal. xciii. 2, 3, 4. *Thy throne is established of old; thou*

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art from everlasting. *The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.* Should there be at any time an ungodly coalition among the nations, to impede any part of his work, or to oppose the progress of his kingdom and interests among men, he can easily controul their wicked, but feeble attempts, to his praise. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise him: the remainder of wrath shall he restrain.* Sometimes, during the contentions and wars of nations, both parties may be the objects of his displeasure, and, in that case, he makes them the mutual avengers of his quarrel against one another. *Through the wrath of the LORD of Hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh; and they together shall be against Judah.* For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, Isa. ix. 19, 21. In such contests, the slain on both sides are *the slain of the Lord.* It is *the sword of the Lord* which hath devoured them, Jer. xii. 12. A very dreadful work of this kind may be yet looked for, (which, indeed, seems to be begun in the present time) previous to the glorious coming of Christ in his kingdom in the latter days. As the nations are generally guilty of departing from the living God, so a very general prosecution of his controversy against them may be expected, according to many scripture threatenings and warnings. You have one alarming passage to that purpose, in Jer. xxv. 31, 32, 33. which, although it was written aforesaid, it was written for

our learning. *A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground. But although the Lord may thus glorify his justice, in taking vengeance on sinful nations and kingdoms, yet he will at all times glorify his faithfulness and mercy also, in the preservation of his church amidst all judicial providences, and in carrying on the work of grace in her, Zech. ix. 8. Dan. ix. 25.*

4. Christ is the Governor among the nations, for gathering them to himself. It is long since this was prophesied of by Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10. *Shiloh shall come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* This belongs to that gracious government, which he will have set up in the world much more extensively than hitherto. All his providential management among the nations looks forward, and is preparatory, to this. *He is head over all things to the church, which is his body.* Few of the nations, comparatively, know any thing about him. He rules in the midst of them, as the God of providence, but they know him not. This shall not always be the case. Isa. lxv. 1. *I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.* Isa. lv. 5. *Behold, says the*
 Father

Father unto him, *thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that know not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the holy One of Israel: for he hath glorified thee.* He will yet gather nations unto himself, by the call of his gospel, and by the power of his Spirit. He will subdue them under his dominion, by means of his word, dispelling their darkness and ignorance, and giving them the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. *He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations,* Isa. xxv. 7. He will make whole nations obedient to the faith, by a powerful revelation of the mystery which was hid from their fathers since the world began. They shall cheerfully submit themselves unto him, Psal. cx. 3. He will not gather them into his kingdom, and under his dominion, by force or compulsion, or by the carnal, nay, diabolical methods of sword and faggot. *His weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God.* His gospel shall come down upon them in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, like a gentle shower of rain, to soften and fructify, and not to overwhelm and sweep away, like a torrent or a flood, Isa. lii. 15. *So shall he sprinkle many nations: the kings shall shut their mouths at him. He shall sprinkle them with his heavenly doctrine; his speech shall drop as the rain, and his doctrine shall distil as the dew; and then kings, and other great people, who are ordinarily most averse to submit to Christ, shall shut their mouths at him, as having nothing to say against his person, his office, and his doctrine.* Such a blessed ingathering of nations to Christ we have to look for, amidst all

present improbabilities, because the execution of this glorious design belongs to Christ's government, Isa. lii. 2. *It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

5. Christ is the Governor among the nations, for liberating them. This belongs to his work of gathering them to himself. In bringing them into a state of gracious and dutiful subjection unto himself, he will extricate them from that bondage which they have, for many ages, been lying under. The nations of this world have been hitherto in a state of the most dreadful slavery,—slavery, much more extensive and terrible, than they are aware of. The greatest part of mankind has been all along under the yoke of Pagan darkness and idolatry, and, therefore, in a state of subjection to Satan. Many nations have been held, for a long course of years, in the most direful subjection to the idolateries and tyranny of Antichrist, and to the delusions of Mahomet. Over how great a portion of the once Christian world, have these great enemies of Christ extended their power, and wreathed their chains? And in proportion as these two systems of infernal error and delusion have spread, so have mankind been enslaved by political tyranny and lawless power. But *the Governor among the nations* will make them free. When his kingdom is extended through the world, he will burst every bond with which the nations have been bound. The continuance of the world in a state of subjection to national systems of error, superstition, and tyranny of whatever kind, is incompatible with Christ's *taking to him his great power,*
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and reigning. When he enlargeth his kingdom, and appears ruling gloriously among men, he will put down all power, which is inconsistent with the prosperity of his kingdom, and the common good and advantage of mankind, as appears from Rev. xi. 15.—18. When *the kingdoms of the world shall more eminently become the Lord's and his Christ's*; when he shall take to him his great power, and reign; then he shall give reward unto his servants, and to them that fear his name, small and great, and shall destroy them which destroy the earth. Then there will be no more trading or making merchandise, either of slaves, or of the souls of men.

6. Christ is the Governor among the nations, for uniting them,—for bringing about a blessed unity and concord among them. They have been hitherto living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Being chiefly under the influence of *Apol-lyon, the destroyer*, they have been much inclined to the mutual destruction of one another. National interest, prejudices, and jealousies, have often conspired to prompt nations to lift up the sword against nations. But believe me, my brethren, *the grand cause of war is the enmity of the nations against God*. While they continue enemies to him, it is impossible that they should be truly friendly to one another. Mens becoming foes to each other was the early fruit of their apostasy from God. The first death, which happened in the world, was a murder. *Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother*. So it must be still. While nations make their own corrupt will the rule of their behaviour, instead of the will of God; their own lusts the spring of action, and not love to God; and their own interest and aggrandise-

ment the end they wish to promote, and not the glory of God; it is no wonder that, like the wild beasts of the field, they *bite and devour one another*. But when *the Governor among the nations* shall gather them to himself, and erect his peaceable kingdom among them, he will *make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth*. That horrid art, which so many glory in, will be held no longer in esteem. People *shall not learn it any more*. A man will not be famous, according as he hath lifted up his axe, or drawn his sword, to cut his brethren of mankind in pieces, but as he acts the part of a loyal and dutiful subject to Christ, and of a peaceable and affectionate brother in the human family. In that day, when *the Lord shall be King, and his name one, over all the earth*, then may we expect that the nations shall be one, Zech. xiv. 9. and ix. 10. Isa. ii. 4.

7. Christ is the Governor among the nations, for bringing them to glorify him, and God in him. This is the chief purpose, for which he is constituted, by his Father's authority, *King over all the earth*. Hence he says, John v. 22, 23. *The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him*. He will have his glory displayed before the nations, by means of the gospel. He will discover to them the glory of his person and of his work, the glory of his righteousness and fulness, the glory of his kingdom and government, Isa. lxvi. 18, 19. *It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them*

them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. He will put the nations in possession, not only of his ordinances, but of the special blessings of his covenant, which he hath purchased for some of all nations, Psal. lxxii. 17. *Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.* He will be feared and adored in every land, and in every clime. *They shall fear the name of the LORD, from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun,* Isa. lix. 19. It is his unalterable determination to bring a revenue of glory to his name from all the earth,—even from the uttermost parts of it,—and that, in spite of all that the nations, which presently continue without him, may attempt to the contrary. *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.* And this is expressly promised unto him in the verse preceding the text. *All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*

We shall conclude this discourse with a few inferences.

1. Hence see, that these nations are in a very dismal condition, who are destitute of the gospel. They are absolutely ignorant of Christ, and of the gracious government with which he is invested, as the King of Zion. They have no knowledge of his laws, and they have not the benefit of his grace. Consequently, *these dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty,* Psal. lxxiv. 20. Without divine revelation,

revelation, there can be no right order of any kind among men. All government and order, where this is not enjoyed, is ungodly. It is only government in wickedness. There can be no proper conformity to the precepts of God's law, and therefore, there is a necessity of being subjected to the penalty of it.

2. We may learn, that these nations enjoy great advantages, that are enlightened by divine revelation, and brought into a state of subjection to the gospel. By this they are under a divine and gracious government. The Lord Jesus Christ rules in the midst of them by his gospel, which is *the sceptre of his kingdom*, and *the rod of his strength*. To them is discovered all that belongs to their duty and happiness. They may adopt the language of godly Zacharias. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David, —that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light*, Psal. cxviii. 27.

3. That the highest homage is due to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is *the Governor among the nations*, and, therefore, we are chiefly to regard his will, and to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. We are, on no occasion, to yield obedience to laws which are contrary to his royal authority, nor to give such homage to any, as may be inconsistent with the homage which we owe to him. He is infinitely superior to the highest governors on the earth,—*higher than kings of any land*. All earthly power

power and authority are vastly below, and, therefore, must yield to that which belongs to him. Our respect for, and obedience unto *the higher powers*, must ever be in subordination to *the highest power*, which is Christ's. The kings of the earth are his subjects, and it is both their duty and interest to love and serve him, Psal. ii. 10.—12.

4. It is great matter of thanksgiving and praise, that our Lord Jesus Christ is *the Governor among the nations*. This is a cheering thought in these present times, considering the convulsed state of the nations. Christ is infinitely well qualified for the station which he fills, in respect of wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness to his trust. He will yet bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. All shall end well as to the interest of his spiritual and independent kingdom. Though he is presently *showing* the nations of Europe *hard things*, and *making them to drink the wine of astonishment*, yet even this shall be overruled for their good in approaching days. Christ's being the Governor among the nations, affords us never-failing ground to hope for that enlargement of his own spiritual kingdom among them, which is so frequently promised in the word. After the long and dark night, the happy day will break, in which *the people will be gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve the Lord*, Psal. cii. 21, 22.

I exhort you all, to submit to Christ's gracious government. Think upon what must be the consequence of your continuing to reject and despise him. The day will come, in which he will not be silent, but speak out, saying, *Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me*, Luke xix. 27.—Seek experience.

rience of his power upon you, for subduing you to himself, ruling, and defending you.—Let the Lord's people be concerned to flourish in his days, and prosper in his reign.—Rejoice that your Lord is *King of all the earth. The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.*—Pray that he may order all the present confusions among the nations to the glory of his own name, and the advancement of the interests of real religion. *After this manner pray ye; Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come.*—Confide in him. The plummet and the sceptre are both in his hand, for building, and ruling Zion.—Pray for the hastening of that happy time, when *all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the Governor among the nations.*

S E R.

* This
immediate
supper.

S E R M O N VII.

CHRIST IS THE MEDIUM OF COMMUNION
BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH*.

GENESIS xxviii. 12, 13.

—Behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven : and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it.—

IN the preceding chapter, we have an account of Jacob's obtaining the blessing from his father Isaac. Isaac intended to have conferred it upon Esau his first born, who was the chief object of his affection. But Jacob, through the advice and instrumentality of his mother Rebekah, whose darling son he was, came in before Esau, and obtained it. The means by which he did so were very sinful. For, as men are not to do evil that good may come, and as a good end cannot give a sanction to the use of unlawful means, so Jacob's gross lying and dissimulation on this occasion are, on no account, to be vindicated, and much less imitated.

But, however blameable Jacob's conduct was, as to the manner in which he obtained his father's blessing,

* This sermon was preached at Haddington, February 21. 1796: immediately before the dispensation of the sacrament of our Lord's Supper.

sing, we have to admire and adore the sovereignty of God, in accomplishing his own word, *the elder shall serve the younger*, and in punishing Esau for *despising his birthright*, by depriving him of the paternal blessing also. In the secret counsel of God it was determined, that the accomplishment of the promise, which was made to Abraham, should take place through the line of Jacob, and not of Esau. Thus, whatever men devise or intend, God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

When Esau found himself supplanted, and deprived of the blessing, he was highly incensed against Jacob, and resolved that, soon after his father's death, which he hoped was now at no great distance, he would dip his sword in his brother's blood, and so rid himself of such a dangerous and successful rival. Upon this, Jacob is advised by his parents to abscond for a time, and to seek safety from his brother's resentment, in the house of Bethuel, his mother's father, at Padan-aram. He is at the same time desired to take a wife of the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother; as both Isaac and Rebekah detested the thought of his espousing any of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom they dwelt. And being thus counselled, he sets out on his journey, unattended by any companion or guide, but confiding in the care and guardianship of the Lord God of his fathers.

From verse 10th to the close of this chapter, we are informed of a gracious meeting which Jacob had with God on his journey. We have an account of his outward accommodation at the time of this meeting in verse 10, 11. *And Jacob went out from Beer-shebab, and went toward Haran. And he lighted up*

on a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. It is probable, that this was at the close of his first day's journey. The Lord thus early appeared to him, to encourage him to set boldly forward in prosecuting the remaining part of it.

It would appear, that there was a town or city, called Luz, in the neighbourhood, as we read in verse 19. that he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. Jacob, however, did not enter into the city, to seek a lodging for that night, because, perhaps, he had no acquaintance there, or did not think himself safe among them. He, therefore, took up his lodging in some of the neighbouring fields, trusting in the protection of that God, who, according to the words of a prophet, can make his people to dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. He had, indeed, a cold bed, a hard pillow, and no curtain, but the wide firmament: yet even here he could say with David, Psal. iv. 8. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, makest me dwell in safety.* Justly should the people of God study to have their mind brought down to their lot, and be content with such things as they have, since he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

However uncomfortable Jacob's situation was, and whatever uneasy thoughts he might have, on account of his being a fugitive from the wrath of an enraged brother, a pilgrim in a strange land, houseless, and forlorn; yet the Lord gave sleep to his beloved servant, and, in his sleep, a most instructive and consolatory dream. *He dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set*

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upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it.

The wise man observes, Eccl. v. 7. that *in the multitude of dreams there are also diverse vanities.* Mens dreams are, for the most part, vain, and often sinful, because they ordinarily proceed from the vanity and pollution of their minds, when they are awake. Yet it is no less certain, that dreams have often been from God himself. Of old he promised to reveal his mind to his servants the prophets in this way. Num. xiii. 6. *God speaketh once, said Elihu to Job, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then openeth he the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,* Job. xxxiii. 14, 15, 16. The people of God have been instructed, warned, directed, and comforted by him in a dream. And of this sort was Jacob's on this occasion.

In it there was something presented to his eyes, and something spoken to his ears. For, you will observe, that *the Lord*, whom he saw *standing above*, or at the top of the ladder, spake unto him in exceeding great and precious promises, and renewed the covenant with him, which he had made with his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, as you will see in ver. 13, 14, 15.

It is what Jacob saw, or the grand object that was presented to his eyes, in this vision, which we presently mean to take some view of. And, in the text before us, you may observe,

I. What was presented to the patriarch. *A ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.*

heaven. A ladder is constructed for the purpose of conveying persons up and down, from a lower to a higher place, or from a higher to a lower. This ladder is here represented as conjoining these two very distant places, *heaven* and *earth*, and so forming a medium of communication between them. And, as it is evident from the passage, that it is a friendly communication and intercourse, which is thereby enjoyed, so, we imagine, this proves beyond all doubt, that our Lord Jesus Christ is here emblematically pointed out. The *ladder*, in Jacob's vision, which seemed to join heaven and earth, was a figure of Christ our glorious Mediator, through whom God graciously comes down to sinners, and through whom sinners have access to God and heaven. This will appear more evident, if we consider,

2. The further account given of this ladder. *And, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it: And, behold the Lord stood above it.* As to the first of these, we seem to have a pretty clear and distinct explication of it, in the words of our Lord to Nathanael, John i. 50, 51, *Jesus said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.* Whether these words of our Lord refer to any extraordinary appearance which he made before Nathanael, of the nature of that on the mount of transfiguration, none can tell. We read (John xx. 30.) that *many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in the book of God.* Many miracles did he perform; and many

glorious displays of his Godhead and greatness did he give, which are not particularly narrated in Scripture. And among these, perhaps, some such appearance, as is described in that text, might be made in the presence of Nathanael and others. They might *see the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.* But we may take these words to mean, particularly, that by *Christ the heavens are opened*,—by his mediation a way is *consecrated into the holiest of all* for guilty sinners,—and, through him, the holy angels are employed in offices of love and kindness, in bearing messages, and, as instruments, accomplishing the purposes of mercy and grace, in behalf of the Lord's people. To shew this to Jacob, we would consider as the end and design of this part of the vision, in which the *angels of God* were seen *ascending and descending upon the ladder.*

In the last clause of the text it is said, *And, behold, the LORD stood above it.* We understand this to point out more fully the design of erecting this ladder; which was, to open up a way to God. *The LORD stood above it*, to intimate, that the ladder led to him, that he was to be met with upon it, and that he was ready to embrace all who improved it, as the way of access to him.

It is to be observed also, that every part of the description in this text is introduced by a note of attention and admiration. *Behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.* It is wonderful, that a method of friendly intercourse between God and sinners was opened up, and that a person was found out who could conjoin *heaven and earth.*—*And, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending*
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ing on it. It is a wonder, that ever a peaceful meeting took place between the holy angels and sinful men. There is no such intercourse between them and their revolted brethren, who *kept not their first estate*. The good angels are never sent on an embassy of peace and grace to hell. But, through Christ, they ascend and descend, performing works of heavenly benevolence and charity to men upon the earth.—*And, behold, the Lord stood above it*. How wonderful, that the Lord of heaven and earth, who *dwells in the high and holy place*, should ever stand, and look down, in mercy and love, upon sinners on the earth! He *stood above it*, looking down with love,—with bowels of compassion, upon Jacob lying on the cold earth, at the foot of the ladder! *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!* Every thing here is wonderful.

But, for a further explication of this text, we shall consider, more particularly, the several parts of it, in the order in which they lie before us. And, indeed, it is but a general view which we can propose to take of them in the bounds of one discourse.—
We may,

- I. Make a few observations concerning this *ladder*, as emblematical of the person and mediation of Jesus Christ;
- II. Speak of the angels of God ascending and descending on it;
- III. Of the Lord's standing above it; and then conclude with some inferences for the improvement of the subject. We are,

I. To make a few observations concerning this *ladder*, as emblematical of the person and mediation of Jesus Christ. We observe,

1. That there is an infinite distance between heaven and earth, or, between God and fallen man. There is a vast distance between the visible heavens and this earth. The Scripture speaks of *the heavens as high above the earth*, and, consequently, at a great distance from it. It was considered to be so great by Solomon himself, as to furnish him with a proverb, Prov. xxv. 3. But it is not the local distance between heaven and earth, of which we speak. However great this is, yet there is an infinitely greater distance in a moral sense. God and the highest angel are infinitely distant, in respect of being and excellency. The angels have their being from God, and the glory, in which they shine, is wholly derived from him. But God *is*, and is infinitely glorious, *in* and *of* himself. If there is an infinite natural distance between God and created beings of the highest and most glorious order, what must the distance between him and sinful men be?

When God created man, though he placed him on the earth, at a distance from the local heaven, which is more especially the throne of the divine glory; yet there was a gracious nearness, and a most intimate fellowship, between God and him. But, when he brake covenant with God, he and all his posterity were banished from God's gracious presence, and deprived of all access to him, and communion with him. Like Lucifer, he might be said to have *fallen from heaven*; because he lost the favour and love of God, conformity to him, and fellowship with him; and, in respect of the demerit of sin,

sin, and of the curse which he fell under, he was *brought down to hell*. What a mercy is it, that God did not cast him, and all his posterity, into it, immediately and actually, as he did the rebellious angels!

It is, however, a serious truth, that, by the entrance of sin into the world, an infinite moral distance takes place between *heaven* and *earth*,—between God and sinners of mankind. Hence men, in their natural estate, are represented as *far off*, Eph. ii. 13. They are so *far off*, that, without the intervention of a mediator, no word of grace and kindness could have been spoken to them, nor any thing truly good conferred upon them, by God in heaven; nor could any of their prayers reach his throne, even upon supposition of their being disposed to cry to him for help.

2. That the uniting of heaven and earth, or the opening up a way of communication between them, is wholly of God. The *ladder*, which Jacob saw, was presented to him in a supernatural and extraordinary manner. The vision was without any foresight, or forethought of his. He had never imagined such a thing on any former occasion. We do not say, that he was a stranger to the mystery of salvation through the promised *seed*, till this time. But we apprehend, that he had not enjoyed, formerly, such a remarkable and striking discovery of it. The Lord now *opened* his eyes and his *ears*, and *sealed his instruction*, not, indeed, *in slumberings upon his bed*, but *in a vision of the night*, when he was asleep upon the cold earth. Justly might the patriarch say, *I never saw it on this fashion*. And, as this vision of Jacob's *ladder* was supernatural, and from the Lord himself, so it is no less true, that the real uniting of
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heaven and earth,—God and man, or, the opening up of a gracious intercourse between them, is wholly of God, 2 Cor. v. 18. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.* It is the fruit of his infinite and eternal wisdom, love, and grace, Eph. i. 7, 8, 9.

There is no man, unless he is a madman, who would propose to construct a ladder, by which he might climb up to the sun, moon, and stars. However foolish such a project would be, yet, comparatively, the execution of it would be more easy, than an attempt to reconcile an offended God and guilty sinners. The distance between the former is only local and finite, but that between the latter is moral and infinite. God only could find out a method of removing the distance between himself and sinful men,—of producing reconciliation, peace, and fellowship, between heaven and earth. Neither men on the earth, nor even angels in heaven, could have supposed such a thing possible, and, much less, could they have devised a method of accomplishing it. It was peculiar to divine wisdom, to know how God might visit sinful creatures in mercy, and *dwell with them upon the earth*, and how they might be exalted to the enjoyment of a place in heaven, Prov. viii. 12.

3. That Christ, in the constitution of his person, is qualified for being a medium of communication between heaven and earth,—God and man. We have already said, that we understand Jacob's ladder as an emblem of Christ, who is, really and spiritually, what this ladder appeared to be in his extraordinary dream. It is described as *set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.* Now, although nothing

nothing can represent the *mystery* of Christ's person, which is great, without controversy, yet we may consider this *type*, as pointing out to us the relation in which he stands to heaven and earth. He is IMMANUEL, *God with us*. In respect of his human nature, he was *set upon the earth*. He had, and continues to have, a real humanity. He took it from the family of Adam. He is *a branch out of the root of Jesse*, Isa. xi. 1. He is that *truth* which is said to *spring out of the earth*, Psal. lxxxv. 11. When he assumed human nature, he did not *drop down* upon the earth, but *sprang out of it*, as one nearly allied to the human family. He was really one of the sons of Adam,—of *red earth*, as the word signifieth, Luke iii. 23,—38.

Our blessed Lord was thus *set upon the earth*, in respect of his human nature. But as to his divine person, he *reacheth to heaven*. He is the Most High God over all, Isa. xlvii. 4. Rom. ix. 5. Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. They are the production of his divine power. *Unto the Son, God saith, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands*, Heb. i. 8, 10. He is *the brightness of glory, and the express image of the Father's person*. He is *in the form of God*, and thinks it not robbery to be equal with God, although he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, Phil. ii. 6, 7. The divine and human natures, which are infinitely distant, were united in his person. *And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh*. Who, except God himself, could have conceived, that God and man could
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be a person, or, that the human nature, so infinitely beneath the divine, could be united with it, in the person of the Son of God? This is *the wisdom of God in a mystery*. Jesus Christ was thus qualified for uniting *heaven and earth*,—God and man, in the bonds of eternal love and friendship. He had the natures of both united in himself. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, John i. 14.

4. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ there is a real conjunction of heaven and earth,—of God and man, and a way made for a peaceable intercourse between them. Jacob saw the ladder extending all the way from *earth to heaven*, and affording, as it were, an opportunity of passing and repassing between these two distant worlds. Through Christ's mediation, heaven and earth are so conjoined, that God comes down to the earth, in rich displays of his mercy and grace, and sinful men get up to heaven, in respect of the enjoyment of all heavenly blessings, Eph. i. 3. The Mediator, by his obedience unto death, removed every obstacle that lay in God's way to us, and in our way to God.

Not only did the divine and human natures meet in the person of Christ, but a holy and just God met with an obedient servant, and an all-sufficient Surety, in him. It was impossible that God and sinners could meet, or have any friendly intercourse, so long as his claim on them was not answered, and his quarrel against them, on account of sin, unavenged. In order that this might be done, the eternal Son of God was substituted into their law-room and stead, and the charge which lay against them was, in consequence of this substitution, found lying against him.

him. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, 2 Cor. v. 21.* He was made sin, in not only being reckoned a sinner by imputation, but in being treated as a sinner, by having the curse of the law executed upon him. And thus God's justice and our iniquities met in Jesus Christ, that *heaven and earth*,—God and sinners, might meet in him in peace. Through the execution of the sentence of the law upon him, in his blood shedding and death, sin was atoned for, and divine justice was satisfied; so that now, in Christ Jesus, neither our sin, however *scarlet and crimson-coloured* it is, nor the justice of God, however strict and inexorable it necessarily is, can prevent the egress of his mercy and grace to us, nor our access to him. *Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh: And having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, Heb. x. 19, 20, 21.*

The ladder, therefore, by which men upon the earth can get near to God and heaven, is just Christ in his blood shedding and death, or his mediatory righteousness. This is like a bridge of communication over the deep gulph that was formed between God and us by sin. By his mediation, a way is made for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. By sin we are removed to a vast distance from God,—a distance infinitely greater than that between the visible heavens and earth. *But now, in Christ Jesus, we who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* Would sinners on earth know

know how to get to heaven,—how to approach to God Most High, so as to meet with acceptance before him, and how to ascend to heaven at last, to the full enjoyment of God, as a father and a portion? They must go to *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*, who, by his meritorious mediation, hath opened a free communication between God and them. The way to *the heavenly Jerusalem*, and to *God the Judge of all*, is by *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*, and by *the blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 23, 24. *Through Christ we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father*, Eph. ii. 18.

5. That sinners of mankind have ready access, and full warrant to improve Christ, as their way to God and heaven. The *ladder*, which the Patriarch saw, was *set upon the earth*. It was set upon that *very earth*, on which Jacob lay, to intimate, that he, in particular, had an opportunity, and that it was both his duty and interest to ascend by it to God, who *stood*, as his own God, upon the top of it. In like manner is Jesus Christ, the great antitypical *ladder, set on the earth*, for the benefit of mankind sinners, that, by him, they may get from earth to heaven and happiness. He was not only *set on the earth*, in the assumption of human nature, in which *he tabernacled among us*; but he hath all along been settled upon the earth, in the dispensation of grace. It is long since he was so *set* among men, in the first promise made to our original parents after the fall. Since that time God has been exhibiting him to men, in the gradual revelation made of him. Thus he is still set among us, in the dispensation of grace, as our way of access to God. What is the design and meaning of the gospel which you enjoy? It is
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just God *setting* a ladder among you on this earth, the top of which reacheth to heaven, that every one of you, who embrace Christ by faith, may attain to heavenly enjoyments in a state of grace, and at last, to a state of glory in heaven itself. In the gospel, God *sets forth* Christ to you, for all the purposes of salvation, Rom. iii. 25. He is *the hope set before you*, which you are warranted to lay hold upon and improve, if ever you desire or expect to *enter within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered*, Heb. vi. 18,—20. The *setting* of this ladder on the earth doctrinally affords warrant and encouragement to all, who hear of it, to betake themselves to it, as their way to heaven. None are prohibited from improving it, nor shall any be rejected, who aim at an improvement of it for this purpose, John vi. 37, 40.

6. In fine, there was only one ladder seen by Jacob, in this vision. He saw not a number of them, or a variety of ways of intercourse between heaven and earth, but one only. Jesus Christ is the only way to God and eternal happiness. He is *the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by him*, John xiv. 6. The way in which Jacob got to heaven, is just the way that we must go, if ever we get there. *Salvation is not in any other than Christ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12.—We proceed,

II. To speak of the next part of the description given of this ladder. *And, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.* For the explication

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of this, we only make the few following observations.

1. That, in consequence of the mediation of Jesus Christ, the holy angels are reconciled, and have a fervent love unto the people of God. When we say this, it is hoped, that you do not understand us to mean, that Christ mediated between angels and men, or, that his satisfaction for sin was made to angels. No; he *gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour*, Eph. v. 2. No satisfaction was due to the angels, because they were not the sovereigns,—the lawgivers of men, nor were men accountable at their bar. But, considering us in our natural estate, the holy angels are enemies to us, because we are enemies to God. They cannot but *hate them that hate him*, and be *grieved with those that rise up against him*. While they burn with holy zeal for the glory of the Creator, they cannot but burn with holy indignation against those who trample upon his authority. They are ever ready to avenge God's quarrel against wicked men. See, for example, what destruction and desolation one of them spread through the Assyrian host, on account of their blasphemy against God, and their rage against his people, Isa. xxxvii. 36. *Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and, when they arose early in the morning, they were all dead corpses.* See also how another of them avenged God's quarrel upon impious Herod, Acts xii. 21, 22, 23. *Upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in his royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god,*
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and not of a man. *And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.*

But, through Christ's mediation, finners being reconciled to God, and become the objects of his favour, they also become the objects of the love and care of the holy angels. Believers are actually in a state of friendship with them, which may be intimated in that text, Col. i. 20. *And (having made peace by the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. The things in heaven may be meant of the innumerable company of angels. and the things on earth are the saints on the earth, between whom and the angels there is the strictest harmony and love. Hence the angels acknowledge the saints as their brethren, and regard them as such, according to what that angel said to John, when the mistaken apostle was proceeding to give him divine honour, Rev. xix. 10. And I, says John, fell at his feet to worship him: and he said unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.*

2. That, in consequence of the mediation of Jesus Christ, the angels are employed in the service of the saints. This we take to be the principal thing intended by this part of Jacob's vision. When he saw *the angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder*, they were employed in works of mercy and kindness, in behalf of the Patriarch and other believers. For although they are engaged, as instruments, in the execution of God's judgments on the wicked, yet when they are said to *ascend* and *de-*

scend on the antitypical ladder, they are offices of charity and love in the performance of which they are then employed. Hence the apostle says, Heb. i. 14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

With regard to the service which they perform in behalf of the people of God, it must be allowed, that the manner of performance is mysterious. While we are in this world, we are very unacquainted with the nature and work of the angels of God. Yet the Scriptures assure us, that their work is, not only to join in the praises of heaven, but to perform the service of God on earth. We find, to this end, that they have, on some occasions, made visible appearances to the saints, as to Abraham, Jacob, Zacharias in the temple, the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, Peter in the prison, and others. Such remarkable and extraordinary appearances are not, perhaps, to be now looked for or enjoyed. But it is beyond doubt, that the saints are as much the charge of angels as ever, and that they are employed in performing similar acts of kindness in their behalf as formerly.

From the Scriptures we learn what they have done for them. They are represented as guardians to the Lord's people. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them, Psal. xxxiv. 7.* Perhaps the outward safety of the saints, both from seen and unseen dangers, is owing to the attendance and protection of these heavenly guards. *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone, Psal. xci. 11, 12.* Their service, in
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this respect, was, doubtless, very necessary to Jacob on this occasion, when he was going into a country where he had never been, and among a people whom he never saw. And he had particular experience of their attention and kindness when he was returning to his own land, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2. *Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And, when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place, Mahanaim.* They are employed in protecting the people of God from the designs which the apostate angels have upon them. So we read, in Rev. xii. 7. that *Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels.* The contest was about the church,—about souls. The dragon and his angels did all they could to have them; but Christ and his angels fought for them. Our Lord said to Peter, *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,* Luke xxii. 31, 32. It was owing to Christ's intercession, that Peter's *faith did not fail* altogether,—that Satan did not get him wholly under his power. But the holy angels might be made use of, as instruments, in his preservation. They are employed in strengthening and comforting the Lord's people under their peculiar and heavy trials. We find that Christ himself enjoyed their ministry in this respect, particularly, in that dreadful conflict which he had in the garden of Gethsemane, Luke xxii. 41,—43. *There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.* Thus also was one of them sent to comfort Paul on his perilous voyage to Rome, Acts xxvii. 23, 24. *There stood by me this night, said he, the angel of God, whose I am, and*

whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. We know nothing against our believing, that the angels are often employed in suggesting words of comfort to the souls of the Lord's people in their spiritual distresses, and especially when they are exposed to the temptations of Satan. If he has power to excite the mind to wicked thoughts, and to throw blasphemous suggestions, like so many *fiery darts*, into it; why should it be thought a thing incredible, that the holy angels should have some instrumentality, in fortifying the mind against them, and in repelling them? We cannot enlarge on this part of the subject. Suffice it to say, in general, that it is, without controversy, evident from the Lord's word, that the angels are instruments of his care about true Christians, and that they watch over them, protect and preserve them, provide for them, and comfort them. They have, therefore, fellowship with angels, even in this present life, and that more than they are often aware of.

3. Lastly, on this part of the subject, we observe, That the benefit, which believers have by the ministry of the holy angels, is constant and permanent. Hence they are represented as *ascending and descending* upon the ladder, as it were, constantly and without intermission. They are not only intelligent, but powerful and vigorous, active and diligent spirits. They can stand in no need of rest or sleep, nor are they liable to fatigue and weariness. They *descend* to deliver their messages, and to execute their commissions; and they *ascend* to give an account of their faithfulness and work, and to receive new orders.

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But we would understand their *ascending and descending* to denote, principally, their diligent attendance on the heirs of salvation, and the unremitting care which they have about them in every situation. They are constantly flying between God and the faints, fulfilling his gracious purposes concerning them.

The people of God are at no time without a heavenly guard. Even when they appear to be most destitute and forlorn, they have the company of angels, and partake of their affection and sympathy. Thus it was with Jacob. He was at a distance from his father's house, in a strange part of the country, and had no bed but the cold ground, in a dark night; yet he has a view of *the angels ascending and descending on a ladder*, which extended between God and him. So that he was not forsaken of his God, and had to say, even of that place, *Surely the Lord is in this place. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.* We have a remarkable instance to the same purpose, in the case of Elisha, as you read in 2 Kings, 6th chapter. He was in the city of Dothan, and the armed hosts of the king of Syria surrounded the city, with a design of apprehending and destroying him. The prophet's servant was afraid, and said, *Alas, my master, how shall we do?* See his answer, in ver. 16, 17. *And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them.* And Elisha prayed, and said, *LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.* And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha. He had a guard of angels about him, in the appearance

appearance of *horses and chariots of fire*, ready, if God should give the order, to burn up and destroy the mighty hosts of the Syrian monarch. Though the saints may be cast on beds of languishing; though they may be hid in dens and caves of the earth, or thrown into prisons for the sake of Jesus; the angels can be no more kept from them, than God himself, Acts xii. 6, 7. In short, they minister to the people of God through the whole of their life, and they perform a most essential and glorious piece of service for them at death, by conveying their souls into the land of everlasting light and glory, Luke xvi. 22. *It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*—We now proceed,

III. To speak of JEHOVAH's standing above the ladder. *And, behold, the LORD stood above it.* So he appeared to do in Jacob's vision. And we have reason to rejoice, that the LORD of heaven and earth, is still standing, and dealing graciously with men, in and through his Son, Jesus Christ, the blessed antitype. It may be for our advantage and comfort, to consider the following things, on this part of the subject.

1. That God stands above this ladder, as a reconciled God,—a God of grace and peace. He stood looking down upon Jacob with bowels of mercy and loving kindness. Though he was lying asleep in the open air, as an outcast and alien from mankind, yet he was the darling of heaven. JEHOVAH was his reconciled God and Friend. He still appears in Christ, reconciled and pacified toward sinners, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. *He hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*

ciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. In no other way is he to be met with as the God of peace, but in and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who made peace by the blood of his cross, Rom. v. 1.

God, no doubt, looks down from heaven upon all the children of men. *The Lord looketh from heaven, says the psalmist, he beboldeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.* But it is with great indignation that he beholds sinners out of Christ. Hence *his face* is said to be *set against* them, Psal. xxxiv. 16. Sinners can have no comfortable views of God, nor intercourse with him, as a reconciled God, but above the spiritual ladder, whose top reacheth to heaven. He is seen every where else, as an offended and sin-revenging Sovereign,—a God, who is both just and powerful to execute deserved punishment upon the guilty. He is still speaking to his adversaries *in his wrath. Tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, against every man that doth evil.*

But *above this ladder*, he is no longer an offended Judge, having got full satisfaction from his Son, our Surety. *His anger is turned away*, and he says, *Fury is not in me.* He proclaims his name, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* Is any guilty sinner, then, wishing for a meeting with God, as a reconciled God? He will find him so in his Son. He will find him gracious and kind *above this ladder*, and no where else.

2. That

2. That JEHOVAH's standing above the ladder may denote his full approbation of it, as the only way of access to him. The erection of it was the device of his own infinite wisdom from eternity. It was *set up from the everlasting ages*, in his gracious and sovereign purpose, Prov. viii. 23. It would have nonplussed all created wisdom to contrive how guilty men, who had become heirs of hell, might find a way to heaven. But God, of his infinite wisdom, contrived a method of making the passage both easy and safe to them. This is no other than his own eternal Son, who is the only *Mediator between God and man*, and, *except by him, no man can come unto the Father*.

Now, God stands above the ladder, as he is in Christ, heartily approving of this method of reconciliation and access to him in peace and love. He has the fullest satisfaction with the obedience and death of Jesus. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake*, Isa. xlii. 21. He *smelled a sweet savour* in the sacrifice which he offered up for the sins of his people, Eph. v. 2. All the perfections of his nature are glorified by his mediation. His holiness was manifested and vindicated by his fulfilment of the law-precept; his truth and faithfulness were displayed by the execution of the penalty; and his justice fully satisfied in the whole of his sufferings and death. Christ *glorified the Father upon the earth*, by *finishing the work* which he gave him to do. And, therefore, JEHOVAH fully approves of him, as a most fit and complete Mediator between himself and sinners. He is still upon the matter speaking concerning him, as he did from *the excellent glory*, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.

3. That

3. That the Lord stands above this ladder, calling men upon the earth to improve it, as their way of access to him. He not only declares his own satisfaction with Christ, and his approbation of what he hath done, in the fulfilment of his mediatory work, but he positively calls and warrants guilty sinners to come to him in this way. He addresses them as John was addressed, when *he looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven, and he heard a voice, as it were of a trumpet talking with him, which said, Come up hither, Rev. iv. 1.* God in heaven calls to sinners upon the earth, to come unto him by Christ,—to ascend to heaven and happiness by his spiritual ladder, which is, for that very purpose, *set upon the earth.* Men are by nature lying in a deep sleep, and in an infinitely more destitute and forlorn condition, in a spiritual sense, than Jacob was in externally at this time. They are asleep in carnal security, stupidity, and unbelief, while Christ, our New Testament ladder, is set just beside them in a gospel dispensation. God graciously calls to them to awake, and ascend for their lives. He saith, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* He tells them, that heaven is opened unto them, that Christ is the way that leads to it, and that, therefore, it is their indispensable duty, and highest interest, to improve him as such. Thus he still condescends to speak to them in a gospel dispensation about what is for their greatest advantage. The gospel is God's voice from heaven. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven, Heb. xii. 25.* God is presently speaking to
you

you from heaven by this gospel, and calling you to come to him by Christ. All that hear his voice in truth do so. *Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me*, said Christ. O be concerned to give the hearing of faith to a gracious God, who is addressing you from above this spiritual ladder. *Incline your ear*, says he, *and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live*, Isa. lv. 3.

4. That the Lord stands above this ladder confirming his covenant of free and rich promises unto his people. This, we find, he did to Jacob, according to the following context. He said, *I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* God is in Christ still speaking for his peoples consolation, and telling them that he stands to that covenant, which they have taken hold of, as their charter and security for all good, both now, and through eternity. He still says, that *he will be ever mindful of his covenant. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word which hath gone out of my mouth.* He is still speaking out *the exceeding great and precious promises* of his word, and speaking them into their hearts with fresh vigour and favour, and so *filling them with joy and peace in believing.* He gives them new intimations of pardoning mercy
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and grace, saying, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake.* He promiseth them his blessing on their spiritual privileges, on the sermons which they hear, and the sacraments, which they attend upon. *I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* He still engages to give them new light, new life, new strength, for every part of their work and warfare. He secures them of his gracious presence, when asleep and when awake, when journeying, like Jacob, and when tarrying at home, when in their own houses, and in the house of God, when living and when dying. In short, he tells them, that *he is a sun and a shield; he will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.* He ratifies and sums up all his promises to them, as he did to Jacob, in these words, ver. 15. *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

5. The Lord stands above this ladder, ordering all things for the good of his people in this lower world. He beholds them in every case and condition. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.* Though they are in a distant land, which is at best but a waste and dreary wilderness to them, yet the Lord is managing all things concerning them in the course of his providence. He stands above the ladder, giving commissions to the angels, especially about his own people. The angels are his servants, and must act according to his orders. They do not go forth of their own accord, but are *sent forth*, Heb. i. 14. They *get a charge* from him what to do, Psal. xci. 11. He charges them to go

and protect such a believer, who may be in danger; to provide supply for another, who is in want; and to comfort another, who is *broken in his heart, and grieved in his mind*. He directs them to succour and strengthen such as are tempted, and to attend and take care of others that are dying. They have all their commissions from him. And it is thus, that the Lord graciously watches over all his people in the course of his providence, and orders all for their good through Christ. Rom. viii. 28. *We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, that are the called according to his purpose.*

6. In a word, The Lord stands above this ladder, receiving all who come to him by it. As this ladder is the way of God to men, so it is the way of men to God. And he stands above it, to intimate, that he receives with open arms all who ascend by it in the exercise of faith. He receives them as the objects of his favour, and most cordial acceptance now. Eph. i. 6. *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* No person shall be rejected who aims at improving Christ, as the way unto the Father. *Him that cometh unto me*, says he, *I will in no wise cast out*, John vi. 37. The Lord also stands receiving the services of his people. They are *an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Their gracious desires, prayers, and intercessions, in behalf of themselves and others, ascend up before God with acceptance through his mediation. And the Lord stands receiving the souls of his people at their death. By this ladder, their departed spirits *mount up, as on eagles wings*, unto the throne of God and of the Lamb. When Jesus

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left the world, he went to the Father, John xvi. 28. So when the believer's days are numbered, it is his unspeakable privilege to have JEHOVAH, as a reconciled God and Father, standing ready to receive his spirit. He may sing on the eve of his departure, as David, Psal. xlix. 15. *God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me. Selah.* And saith Christ to all his disciples indeed, who are yet sojourning in this strange land, *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also,* John xiv. 2, 3.

We shall conclude this discourse with a few inferences.

1. Hence see, a notable display of the sovereign grace and love of God to sinners of mankind. This appears in his erecting a ladder upon the earth, by which they may get to heaven. This is such a display of grace and mercy, as never was, and never will be made to fallen angels. There is no ladder from *hell* to *heaven*, but there is one from *earth* to *heaven*. See then the sovereignty of divine grace to you, sinners of mankind! You are at a vast distance from God, and you could do nothing to remove that distance. You could not make even a single step towards him. In this case God said, 'Since they cannot ascend up to me, I will descend to them, guilty, rebellious, and unworthy as they are. In the riches of my infinite wisdom and grace, I will set a ladder upon the earth, which shall reach to heaven, and, by it, they shall be brought to the full enjoyment of my-

'self.' You should wonder at this, as Jacob did, *Behold, a ladder set upon the earth!*

2. Hence see, how precious Christ in his person and mediation is, and how much we ought to value and improve the revelation made of him to us by the gospel. How pitiable is the condition of these men who never enjoyed this privilege! There is a way to God and heaven, but they know it not. In the gospel this glorious *ladder is set* among you,—as it were, just beside you,—beside *every one of you*, that you may get out of a state of guilt and woe, into a state of favour and acceptance with God; and that, at last, you may get safely out of a *world lying in wickedness*, and which is under the curse, into a state of eternal blessedness in heaven. What a precious person is Christ, in whom God and sinners may thus meet in peace! All the divine purposes of grace meet in him. They were purposed *in him before the world began*. All the precepts of God's law were fulfilled by him, and all the threatenings of it were executed upon him. All the promises of the new covenant centre in him, and all intercourse with heaven is through him.

3. Hence see the folly and wickedness of attempting to draw near to God, and to attain to heaven, in any other way than by this New Testament ladder. There never was another set upon the earth, by which men may get to eternal happiness. 1 Tim. ii. 5. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*. It must, therefore, be very dangerous to attempt to approach to God, in the way of overlooking Christ and his mediation. There is no access to him, nor communion with him, but through Christ, the *new and living way*. Yet

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how many mad professors of religion are there, who pretend to worship God, and to be on the way to heaven, and yet take all their encouragement, and found all their expectations of meeting with God upon themselves, their own seriousness, diligence, constancy in duty, and the like. But wilt thou know, O vain man, what God is, when he is seen separate from the person and mediation of Christ, or, not above this spiritual ladder? He is an angry, a threatening, a dishonoured, and a distant God. So that you have no access to him in peace and grace, but here.

4. We may learn, that they are absolutely safe, who betake themselves to Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. They have God to be their God, according to a covenant which cannot be broken. They are the objects of his special love and care, enjoy his presence *in all places whither they go*, and he will bring them, at last, into that land, where his glorious presence is manifested. *So shall they be ever with the Lord.* They are guarded by the angels in all their ways. They bear them up in their hands. They are ever attentive to them, in all wants, and wrongs, and weakness. None may dare to injure them, but at the greatest hazard. The angels are ever ready to avenge their quarrel. Matth. xviii. 10. *Take heed, said Christ, that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

5. We may learn, whence the communion-table derives all its sweetness, and is so pleasant to true Christians. There is access to hold communion with God through Christ. The sacramental table is covered on earth, before men who are still upon the

earth; yet there is access to communion with the God of heaven, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. In the preaching of the word, the ladder is set on the earth doctrinally; and it is exhibited symbolically in the sacrament of the Supper, by visible signs, in the use of which there is to be an improvement of Christ, as the medium of communion with a Three-one God. At his table, his peoples *souls, and all that is within them*, should be ascending up to God, as their God and portion, through the blood shedding and death of Christ. *Having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, Heb. x. 21, 22.*

We exhort you all to lay to heart your sinful and sad state by nature. You are *far from God*. You have *fallen by your iniquity*. You have forfeited all right to heaven, and you can never regain it by any attempts of your own.—Bless God for the device of his infinite wisdom, in finding out a method in which sinners might be brought to himself, in a perfect consistency with the glory of his nature and perfections. In the satisfactory and meritorious mediation of Christ, all divine attributes are glorified. *Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have embraced each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good.*—Bless God for revealing Christ to you,—for *setting the spiritual ladder, doctrinally, in that part of the earth where it is your lot to dwell. The lines are fallen to you in pleasant places, in this respect.*—Be-
take yourselves to Christ by faith, as you would
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with to be brought to heaven, and be prevented from sinking down into the pit of everlasting perdition. Pray for a spiritual discovery of Christ, and for grace to improve him as the way into the holiest of all. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.—You, who have already come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all, are bound to be aiming at a present improvement of him, in the renewed exercise of faith. You are to be looking unto Jesus, as your way to fellowship with God, in his ordinances to-day, and your way to heaven at last. *We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*—Be thankful that the ladder is still standing among you, and that God is still above it. Let this fill you with wonder, love, and gratitude. *Behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven! And, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it! And, behold, the Lord stood above it!*

S E R-

S E R M O N VIII.

A GOOD WORK BELONGS TO THE OFFICE
OF A SCRIPTURE-BISHOP*.

I TIM. iii. 1.

—*If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

THIS epistle was written by Paul to Timothy, an Evangelist, whom the apostle had left at Ephesus, as appears from chap. i. 3. Paul himself being necessarily called elsewhere, desired him to continue for some time at Ephesus, that he might confirm and encourage the disciples, and carry on the good work which had been begun in that place. —The chief design of this epistle is to direct the young evangelist in the fulfilment of the duties of his office, to the glory of God, and the good of his church. Thus the apostle expresses his design himself, ver. 14, 15. of this chapter. *These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest*

* This Sermon was preached at the Ordination of The Reverend Mr THOMAS M'CRIE, to the Office of the Holy Ministry, in the Second Associate Congregation, Potter-row, Edinburgh, May 26.

1796.

est to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Accordingly, in the preceding chapters, he lays down several duties, the observation of which Timothy was to press upon the members of that church. He was to exhort both the ministers and the people to regard and abide by the truth of the gospel, in opposition to those who would corrupt it by vain fables or gross errors. He was to urge them to perseverance in the great duty of prayer, and that in their prayers they should not be selfish, but of a public, a truly catholic spirit. They should *pray for all men*, but especially for those in lawful civil authority, as in the beginning of the preceding chapter. He was to exhort the women to be modest, sober, silent, obedient, and not to aspire at that domination, either in the house, or in the church, which God had not allowed them.

In this chapter, he proceeds to treat of the work and necessary qualifications of several church-officers. He begins with a description of a gospel minister, at least, of what every one of those, who bear that character, ought to be. This he does in the first seven verses of the chapter.—He introduceth himself by a serious commendation of that office, and of the person whose views are sincerely and graciously directed unto it. *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

The apostle asserts this, in a very particular manner. *This, says he, is a true saying.* He was not writing at random, or without thought. He was assured, that the office was of the most excellent and honourable kind, and that the work, though great, was pleasant and delightful, advantageous and profitable.

fitable. Though the preachers of the gospel were held in great contempt, as they still are, by the slaves of sensuality, and the votaries of corrupt reason; though their office was despised, and themselves counted as the filth of the world; yet the apostle knew, and he knew from experience, that the office was important and honourable, and the work good. There was, therefore, no need for any person to be ashamed to devote himself to the service of Christ, to labour in the work of the gospel. For *this is a true,—a faithful saying,—a saying worthy of credit, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

We may observe, what is here supposed, and what is asserted.

1. What is here supposed. *If a man desire the office of a bishop.* It is but one word in the original language, which is here translated *the office of a bishop*. It might literally be translated *the oversight*; or, retaining the word used in our version, it might be read *the bishopship*, in the same manner that a similar Greek word (*αποστολη*) is translated *apostleship*, in 1 Cor. ix. 2. *The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.* But the word being expressive, not only of the act or work of *overseeing*, but also of the power and authority with which a person is invested to take *the oversight* of Christ's flock, our translators have very properly expressed it in so many words, as here, *the office of a bishop*.

But a question necessarily occurs here. What are we to understand by *a bishop*? And in answer to this, we would observe, that there is a very great difference between the modern idea affixed to that word, and the office which the Holy Ghost intended thereby.

thereby. There is a great difference indeed between the *scripture-bishop*, and the person so called in Popish and Prelatical churches.—The modern idea of a *bishop* is that of a person pretending to be invested with a lordly dominion and authority over the rest of his brethren, who *labour in the word and doctrine*, and dispense the other ordinances of worship. He claims power in his own person to license and ordain them, and to silence and depose them. He extends his spiritual jurisdiction over a large tract of country, and pretends to watch for the souls of vast multitudes, whose faces he never saw, and who seldom or never saw him. He lives in ease and affluence, *feeding upon the fat, and clothing himself with the wool*, and leaves the care of the flock to a set of underlings, who, as they depend on him, must be submissive and obsequious to his every nod. He is a creature possessing some thousands a-year, dwelling in a magnificent palace, lolling in a sumptuous chariot, sitting in the supreme council of the kingdom, judging in matters of state, and taking the precedence of many of the nobles of the land. But *to preach the gospel to the poor, to instruct the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort the mourners, to preach the word in season and out of season, to labour in word and doctrine, to visit the sick and dying*,—these and other important duties seldom occupy the time and attention of him, who is now ordinarily called a *bishop*. Such a person, however, we presume, is not to be found among the servants and officers appointed by the King and Head of the Church.

What then are we to understand by a *bishop*, according to the scripture? We answer, that the *bi-*
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shop whom Paul here intended, and the person who is uniformly so called in God's word, is no other than the *teaching presbyter*, or *elder*, or what we ordinarily call a *minister of the gospel*. This appears, when we consider that the names *bishop* and *presbyter* or *elder* are given indiscriminately to the same office-bearers in the church. We have one instance of this in Paul's farewell discourse to the ministers of the church of Ephesus, recorded in the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. In ver. 17. we read, that *from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church*. In ver. 28. we find him addressing these *presbyters* or *elders* in this manner: *Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*. The word which, in that text, is translated *overseers*, is substantially the same which in our text is translated *the office of a bishop*, both coming from a word which signifies *to inspect* or *oversee*. We may also observe what was the great work of these *overseers* or *bishops*. They were *to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*;—to feed the church with *the word of life*,—the pure truths of the everlasting gospel, in opposition to erroneous teachers, who, like *grievous wolves*, would endeavour to destroy *the flock*, by *speaking perverse things*. Now the apostle must have committed a great mistake, in calling these ordinary *teaching elders* or ministers by the name of *bishops*, if, indeed, *the office of a bishop* was, by divine authority, so much superior to the station which they held, as some allege. But it being impossible that he should say an improper thing, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we consider it as an uncontestible proof, that the scripture-bishop,

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and the teaching presbyter or minister of the word, are designations of one and the same office-bearer in the church.—Another evidence of this we have in 1 Pet. 5th chap. There we have the Apostle Peter also addressing himself to *the elders*, who officiated among the Christians scattered through various provinces, in ver. 1. *The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.* In ver. 2. he exhorts them in these words, *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.* In the Greek, there is but one word for *taking the oversight thereof*; and it might, with equal propriety, be read, *overseeing it, or doing the work of a bishop unto it.*—We might have adduced various other proofs from Scripture, that *the office of a bishop* here meant by the apostle is the same with the ministerial office, and that it intends no more than those who are regularly called to teach and rule in the house of God. But this may further appear from the sequel of the discourse.

We have also to notice here, that the apostle supposes that this office is *desired*. *If a man desire the office of a bishop.* The word signifies to *desire earnestly*, so as to have the heart set upon what is desired. It supposes, that a person's mind and affections are turned towards this sacred office, as what he is desirous of being invested with, not from any selfish, grovelling, or improper motives, but from love to God and his service, and with a sincere wish to glorify him in that station. It also intimates, that persons are to enter into this office in a free and voluntary manner, with their heart's consent. No

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man is to be pressed into the service of the Redeemer, or compelled to bear office in his church. *The flock of God* is to be *fed, not by constraint, but willingly*.—Now the apostle having supposed, that a *man desires the office of a bishop*, let us observe,

2. What is asserted by him. *He desireth a good work*. If we were to consider *the bishop*, in the Popish or Prelatical sense, the consequent assertion might rather have been, *he desireth a good living, a good settlement, a good income. He desireth ease, and wealth, and dignity, and power*. No, saith the apostle, *he desireth a work, a good work*. The word signifies something that requires labour, attention, and diligence. *The office of a bishop*, or gospel-minister, doth not allow persons to indulge in idleness and sloth. It is a work, a great and laborious work, both for the body and the mind.—But it is also *a good work*. The appointment of this office in the church is from the sovereign, rich, and free goodness of God, and is designed for the great and good ends of his glory, and the eternal welfare of men.—The apostle seems here, both to discourage rashness in entering upon this office, and to encourage the self-diffident. Those, who would enter upon it without due consideration, reckoning it a station which may be easily filled, are told by the apostle, that it is *a work*, a work of labour and diligence, in the performance of which they are not to expect carnal ease and pleasure. Those, on the other hand, who are timid and self-diffident, who are afraid to enter upon it, when they consider the vast magnitude and importance of this office, are here told, that it is *a good work*. If they desire it, and enter upon it, in a dependence upon Him, whose work it is, and with

a single eye to his glory, and the good of souls, they have no reason to be afraid; for it is *a good work*: They shall find it to be both pleasant and profitable, and be comfortably supported in the performance of it.—The method which we propose to follow, in discoursing further upon this subject, is,

- I. To make a few observations relative to *the office of a scripture-bishop*, or minister of the gospel;
- II. Speak of the *work* which belongs to this office;
- III. Consider it as *a good work*;
- IV. Speak of the right *desire* of this office and work; and conclude with a few inferences.—We are,

I. To make a few observations relative to *the office of a scripture bishop*; or minister of the gospel.

1. That this is an office of divine institution. The popish, prelatical, or diocesan bishop, is of human invention only,—a mere creature of man's making. It cannot, with justice, be pled, that they are the successors of the apostles, who had a superior oversight of the church; because the apostolic office was an extraordinary one, and was to cease with themselves, as it did, when the canon of Scripture was completed. So that any superiority of office, now, above a teaching presbyter, seems no where to be countenanced in the word of God.

But the office of the scripture-bishop or gospel ministry is of divine authority. Christ the King and Head of the church is the author of all offices in her, 1 Cor. xii. 28. *God hath set some in the church, first*

apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. He set, first, apostles. These persons were immediately chosen by himself, and ordained to that extraordinary office, Luke vi. 12, 13. In those days he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And, when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles. He called them Apostles, and employed them as his legates or ambassadors, to carry the tidings of salvation through the world. And he gave them extraordinary powers to work miracles, for the confirmation of the doctrine about himself, which was taught by them. The great work incumbent upon them was, to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to the world lying in wickedness. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Our Lord also intimated to them, that the part of their work which consisted in teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, was to be performed by his authority, and under his eye, to the latest posterity. Hence he said, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* This did not mean, that these very men, to whom our Lord spake, were to exist in the church through all ages. No; they were not suffered to continue, by reason of death. Even the apostles did not live for ever. But the Lord's promise intimated, that the preaching

ing of the gospel, and the work of the ministry, should not die with them. Extraordinary gifts should cease, but the ordinary work of the gospel ministry should never die out of the church. Accordingly, the apostle observes, that the ascended Redeemer provided officers to his church, to supply the want of the apostles, whom he was to take to himself, Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. *When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men: He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*

2. That persons are to enter into this office according to Christ's will, and by his authority. If it be an office in his house, it cannot be lawfully held, but according to the will of him who is the Lord of the house. Every man reckons it his right to choose and appoint his own servants, to prescribe to each the place which he is to fill, and would resist every attempt to thrust persons into his service, contrary to his own choice. Must it not much more belong to the King of Zion, to have the offices of his kingdom occupied by persons whom he hath chosen, and who enter into them according to the order which he hath appointed?

As Christ hath instituted the office, so it belongs to him to invest persons with it. We have already seen that he *chose twelve of his disciples, whom he also named apostles*, and sent them forth to preach. Paul tells us that *Jesus Christ put him into the ministry*,

stry, 1 Tim. i. 12. And, speaking to the Ephesian elders, he told them that *the Holy Ghost made them overseers of the flock*, Acts xx. 28.

It is true, that the apostles were immediately called by Christ himself. Even in his humbled estate, he exercised his royal power and authority, in appointing, first, *twelve*, and then, *seventy*, and sending them forth to preach the gospel of the kingdom. And Paul was afterwards called, in a miraculous manner, by the glorified Redeemer, and *sent to bear his name before the Gentiles*. Such immediate and extraordinary calls to the ministerial office are not now to be looked for. Yet the authority, which the gospel ministry have to exercise every part of their office, is no less from Christ, than that of the apostles themselves. For, as the apostles received their commission from Christ immediately, so they were to convey office-power and authority to their successors, or, to appoint and ordain persons to the ministerial office, who were, in like manner, to convey the same to others. And thus the power, which was at first immediately from Christ, is transmitted down, through the medium of his office-bearers, from one generation to another. That the apostles and other officers had a commission to ordain proper persons, in Christ's name, to the ministerial office, appears from various places of Scripture. Timothy, to whom this epistle was written, was set apart to his office by *the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, chap. iv. 14. And the apostle directs him to convey ministerial power to others, 2 Tim. ii. 2. *The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

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It, therefore, appears, that none can occupy *the office of a scripture-bishop*, or discharge the duties of the ministry, who are not regularly appointed unto it, without being guilty of contemning the authority of Christ, and intruding themselves into a place which he hath not called them to fill.—It likewise appears, that the power and authority, which a gospel ministry have for performing the duties of their office, is derived from Christ alone. It is not merely from their fathers and brethren, who, in a presbyterial capacity, set them apart to that office, but from Christ, who hath delegated such a power unto the presbytery. They receive their commission from Christ, only that commission is transmitted from him to them, through the medium of those who have formerly received the same commission by the same means.—And hence also it appears, that ministerial power is not derived from the people. Though the call of the people is necessary to constitute a proper scriptural relation between their minister and them, yet it is not their call that gives him authority to discharge the duties of his office. This he has from Christ, by *the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*.

3. That those who have this office have to account to Jesus Christ for the fulfilment of the work belonging to it. This is evident, from its being an office of his appointment, and from his fixing persons in it, in the course of his providence. Is it an office in his house, and an office of very great importance? Then it must be certain, that he will require all who hold it to give an account of their conduct. The apostle, in Heb. xiii. 17. exhorts Christians to *obey them that have the rule over them,*
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for, says he, *they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.*

A gospel minister is God's servant. He placeth him in that office. He points out the work which he is to perform. He gives him directions how that work is to be managed by him. And he says to him, *Occupy till I come.* He warns all his servants that he is to come, that he will bring them before him, and require an *account of their stewardship.* For this reason we find the apostle addressing Timothy, in that very solemn manner recorded in 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. *I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.*

4. That persons, who *desire the office of the scripture-bishop, or gospel-minister,* should enter upon it seriously and uprightly. It is an office in the house of God, and, in the faithful discharge of it, his glory and the good of mens souls are very deeply interested. It ought to be entered upon with holy fear and trembling, and with sincerity and integrity. Every person invested with this office, should look upon the day on which he is thus publicly devoted to God, as one of the most important and interesting, that ever did or can pass over him. He then, before God, angels, and men, consecrates himself to the Most High God and Redeemer. He makes an unlimited surrender of himself to his service, saying, as David in Psal. cxvi. 16. *Oh LORD, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant.* He takes the charge of immortal souls, and becomes bound to *watch for them, as one*
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who shall give account. What is it that can impress the conscience, what can engage the serious attention of men, if this does not? If ever persons be in earnest, and acting as in the sight of God, we would look for it on such an occasion.

It must, however, be matter of deep regret to all who have any sense of religion, that too many enter into the ministry, whom the most wide-stretched charity can scarce judge to have any serious concern about the nature and importance of the office. It is, indeed, become too common for persons to enter into it in a manner, which is extremely horrible. It is usual for persons, at their ordination, to declare solemnly their belief of the doctrines of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, which contain a compend of the precious and peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and that they shall teach them, in opposition to every error, unto the end of their lives. Yet it is notorious, that too many, who have made such a vow, have never preached one sermon, perhaps, in strict agreeableness to these standards, and the general tenor of their ministrations is to beat down the doctrines contained in them. Is not this entering on the ministry by perjury, and such perjury, as is, so far as we know, without a parallel among men? When persons can enter into the service of the holy Jesus, devote themselves to God in the work of the ministry, and take the charge of souls with a view to the eternal world, with a lie in their mouths, and that attested upon oath, with a view to the judgment-seat of Christ, what consciences must they have, and what dreadful fruits may be expected from their ministrations! We shudder at the thoughts of perjury in civil cases; but this, which is, in some respects,

spects, more atrocious, is sadly prevalent, and yet nothing thought of!—But we shall proceed,

II. To speak of the *work* which belongs to the office of the scripture-bishop, or gospel-minister. *He desireth a good work.*

We might observe here, in general, that a gospel-minister has the common work of all other Christians on hand, which is, to pay attention to the state and exercise of his own soul. He has to *give all diligence to make his calling and election sure.* He has to *live by the faith of the Son of God.* He has to wrestle in the spiritual conflict, to *fight the good fight*, and to *lay hold on eternal life.* He has to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* In short, being a guilty sinner by nature, as well as others, he has to aim at a daily improvement of the glorious Saviour, whom he recommends unto his people, lest while he *preaches the gospel to others*, he himself *should be a cast away.*

But, besides that he has to *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling*, he has very great and important work to perform, as an instrument in the salvation of others. It cannot be expected that we should, at this time, describe all the various particular duties which are included in the ministerial work, but only touch at some of the great lines thereof.

1. One great and leading part of his work is to preach the everlasting gospel. So you will observe that, among the qualifications of a bishop mentioned in the following context, we have this one in ver. 2. that he is to be *apt to teach.* The scripture-bishop is not to *bind the burden* of preaching upon others,

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and himself scarce to *touch it with one of his fingers*. The apostles of the Lamb had this prescribed unto them, as a part of their work which they were to pay special and unremitting attention unto. Mark xvi. 16. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*. Matth xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*. And Paul mentions it with gratitude, as the great work which the Lord called him unto. Eph. iii. 8. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*. 1 Tim. ii. 7. *I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity*. He acknowledged that he was under a sweet necessity to discharge this duty. 1 Cor. ix. 6. *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel*. And he earnestly enjoins it on Timothy. 2 Tim. ii. 2. *Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season*.

The ministers of the gospel are called *stewards of the mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 1. *The mysteries of God*, are all the precious truths contained in his word. Their being called *stewards of these*, implies, that they are committed to their care. And for what purpose, but to be dealt out to God's family? A steward in a great house is not to keep all his master's substance under lock and key, and to allow the family to starve, but is to *give every one their portion in due season*. So the gospel-minister is a *steward of the mysteries of God*, for the express purpose of making them known, holding them forth,
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and setting them before the children of God's household. Hence Paul, in Eph. vi. 19. intreats the Christians at Ephesus, to *pray for him, that utterance might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.*

A minister is to preach *all the counsel of God.* He is not wittingly, or, of choice, to conceal any truth, or any duty, which has the stamp of Christ's authority, however disagreeable it may be to some hearers. He is to hold forth every part of divine truth, when it comes in his way, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.* For if his chief study be to *please men*, he shall not be accounted the faithful *servant of Christ*, Gal. i. 10. But the grand subject of his meditation, his study, and his preaching, must be *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. This is what is strictly and properly called the gospel. It is a doctrine informing a guilty sinner about a Saviour,—a Saviour, who is divine, who took the nature of sinners, who stood in their room, bare their sin, and obeyed and died for them. They have the best ground to believe and expect, that this doctrine God will bless, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers. The substance of every sermon which deserves the name of gospel, will always be comprised in these words of John the Baptist, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!* John i. 29.

2. That to dispense the other ordinances of worship, in their purity, according to Christ's appointment, belongs to the office of a minister of the gospel, as so many parts of his work. We do not judge it expedient to enlarge upon the nature of these, nor upon

upon the manner in which he is to endeavour to dispense them, as our time could not allow us to do justice to such an extensive subject. He is to be the mouth of the worshipping congregation, in public prayer to God. This must always attend the preaching of the word, and appears to have been an ordinance, which the apostles paid special attention unto, —a duty which they abounded in. Acts vi. 4. *We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* The dispensation of the seals of the covenant, or, of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, are also parts of the ministerial work; as appears from Matth. xxviii. 19. *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* And that the dispensation of the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a part of a minister's work is evident from 1 Cor. xi. 23. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That our Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, &c. compared with 1 Cor. x. 16. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the body of Christ?* He is to bless the people in the name of the Lord, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Besides these, he has to catechise his people, to teach and exhort privately, and, *from house to house*, to visit, instruct, and comfort the sick and dying, with other things which we do not at present insist upon.

3. That the exercise of government and discipline is another part of the work of a scripture-bishop. Hence he is said to have *a care of the church*, in ver. 5. of this chapter. *If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of*

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God? Our Lord Jesus Christ is the King and Supreme Ruler in Zion. But, as he exerciseth his prophetic office now, mediately and ministerially, by the instrumentality of weak men, and thus puts *the treasure into earthen vessels*; so he also exerciseth his kingly power and authority ministerially, by appointing the same weak and imperfect men to bear rule in his church under him. And hence *governments* are mentioned among the *gifts* which he hath bestowed on the New Testament church, 1 Cor. xii. 28. Hence also a gospel ministry are said expressly to bear rule. Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves*; compared with 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

This ministerial authority, or power to rule, does not at all imply any right vested in the scripture-bishop, to make new laws in the church of Christ; but only to execute the laws which Christ has already established by his supreme authority. Hence the Apostle Peter says to the elders, in 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. that they were to *feed the flock of God among them, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, —not for filthy lucre,—neither as being lord's over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.* The Apostle Paul declares, that their *authority is for edification*, that is, for the spiritual advantage of the body of Christ. 2 Cor. x. 8. *Though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, (which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction), I should not be ashamed.* But it never can be for the edification of the body, to deny rulers that *authority which the Lord hath given them.* And, therefore,

therefore, the apostle exhorts Christians to respect and esteem those who *are over them in the Lord*, because the opposite behaviour would be a great mean of preventing their spiritual advantage, 1 Theff. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 7.

The exercise of government and discipline, though it is a necessary part of the bishop's work, along with others, who also rule in the church, yet it is often found to be none of the most easy and pleasant parts of it. If the Lord had not told him that it is *a good work*, he would often find reason to shrink from it. As the faithful minister can say with an apostle, *I have no greater joy than that my children walk in the truth*; so there is no heavier burden to his mind, than the scandals which break out among them. Too often he finds those, who stand in the most frequent need of discipline, to be most backward to submit unto it. How to deal with the scandalous; how to bring them to some sense of their sin; how to be faithful to God and the church, and yet conscientiously tender to them; how to make a difference of some from others, without partiality, *hating even the garment spotted with the flesh*;—these are often burdens upon his mind, with which neither elders nor people can be fully acquainted. As a member of higher courts, the difficulties often increase. Causes frequently occur, in which ministers must either shrink from the line of duty, or be reproached without mercy. Even these, whose best interest they may have especially in view, are frequently the most liberal in their abuse.

But though such difficulties and discouragements often occur in this part of his work, yet he is neither to shun it, nor perform it deceitfully, as a man-plea-

fer. He is to judge and act in it for God, according to the best light of his own mind and conscience from the word. He is to hold on, without regarding *the lion in the way*.

4. In fine, we observe, on this part of the subject, That all these, and other parts of his official duty, are a *work, a great work*. The scripture-bishop's place is not the seat of carnal ease, or supine indolence and sloth. These who would fill it faithfully, must not expect to *lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; nor to chaunt to the sound of the viol, and drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments*. They must be active and diligent; watchful and laborious. Gospel ministers are said to *labour in the word and doctrine*, and they are compared to those *labouring in the harvest field*. *Pray ye, said Jesus, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest*.

Their work in their closets, when they are preparing for public service, as well as in their public ministrations themselves, is of a laborious kind. *Much study is a weariness to the flesh*. Yet they cannot expect the Lord's countenance to afford them any comfortable throughbearing and success in his work, without devoting a reasonable portion of their time to it. 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all*.—In short, when we consider the various parts of this office, and the duties belonging to it in private and public; when we consider the various cases which the gospel minister has to address himself

himself unto; that he has to instruct the ignorant, alarm the careless; to *strengthen the weak hands*, and to *confirm the feeble knees*; to *comfort those that mourn in Zion*, to succour the tempted, and to *heal the broken in heart*; to *reprove and convince the gain-sayers*, and to encourage and confirm God's people in the way of faith and holiness; when, I say, we consider all these, it must appear that his office is not an empty name, nor an useless sinecure, but *a work*, a weighty and laborious work.—We proceed,

III. To consider it as *a good work*.

Persons sometimes labour very hard in a bad work. Sinners work iniquity with greediness and assiduity. Men, in general, spend their strength, their time, and their attention, upon these works that cannot profit, either themselves or others, as to their best interests. *For what hath a man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrow, and his travel grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity*, said Solomon.—But the work of a bishop is *a good work*,

1. Because it is God's work. It is a work which he hath prescribed and appointed. It was God our Saviour who gave the commission to the apostles, in consequence of the authority with which he was invested, as Mediator, by JEHOVAH the Father. *All power*, said he, *is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.* The Apostle Paul calls it *the work of Christ*, in Phil. ii. 30. where, speaking of Epaphroditus, he says, *that for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life.* He was a man, who was willing

to sacrifice all that was dear to him in the world, to promote *the work of Christ*,—the success of the gospel, and the welfare of mens souls.

Gospel ministers are called *ambassadors*. Now an ambassador is not officiating his own business, is not acting for himself, nor managing his own private or personal concerns, but acting in and discussing the business of him that sent him. So when the ministers of Christ are dealing with men about their spiritual and everlasting concerns; when they call and beseech them to embrace the Saviour, whom *God hath sent to bless them, in turning them away from their iniquities*; they are not acting in their own name, or giving their own private opinion and advice, but they are delivering God's message. 2 Cor. v. 20. *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

The gospel which they preach is not their own. It is not *a cunningly devised fable*,—not a scheme of their own contrivance, nor are they permitted to model and fashion it according to their own taste. It is a system of truth revealed by the Infinite God, and they are *intrusted* with it for the purpose of spreading it among men. 1 Tim. i. 11. Says Paul, *The glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed to my trust.* They are restricted from teaching any thing beside or contrary unto God's revealed truth, and they are prohibited from a wilful concealment of any part of it. *Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* The opinion and inclination of a servant are not to be his rule in managing his master's work, where his master has given him positive and plain directions concerning it. The

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servants of Christ must not study, either to please themselves, or any other man whatever, contrary to the revealed will of their great Lord. *For to the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

It is proper for them at all times to reflect, that it is God's *good work* that they are employed in; that they are his servants; that they are acting not for themselves, but for him; and, therefore, that they should study, both to teach, and to rule, as they are persuaded Christ would do, were he present, in a bodily manner, himself.

2. This is a *good work*, because the great end of it is to glorify God. Every thing is good, so far as it tends to this end,—the end which God proposes to himself in all his works and dispensations. It is said, when God finished the work of creation, that he *saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.* It was perfectly agreeable to the will, and declarative of the glory of its omnipotent LORD. *For the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.* In this respect, all the dispensations of his providence are good, as they all tend to his glory, who *doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

But he manifests his glory, in a more wonderful, bright, and illustrious manner, by means of the gospel dispensation, than by all his other works. *In that salvation wrought by him, his glory is made great.* As the gospel makes known this salvation, it exhibits to angels and men such a view of the glorious perfections of God, as is to be seen in no other glass. *The ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory,*

glory. There we see *mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embracing each other.* There we behold justice and holiness, faithfulness and truth, shining with unspotted majesty and glory; while all the riches of mercy, grace, and goodness, are conferred on them that were *ready to perish* in their sins. Here is *good will* extended, and *peace* bestowed, upon sinners of the human race, in a full consistency with *glory to God Most High.*

Now the great work of a gospel ministry is to publish *the glory of the mighty Lord*, as displayed in the mystery of redemption. They have to *shew forth his salvation from day to day; to declare his glory among the heathen, and his wonders among all people.* They are the instruments which God, in a special manner, makes use of for promoting his declarative glory upon earth. Although they are weak and unworthy in themselves, yet, by divine constitution and appointment, they are made in a manner absolutely necessary to the advancement of the work of grace in the church. For that work cannot be carried on, but by the means of divine ordinances; and these ordinances cannot be supported and maintained, without some such persons to dispense them, as God is pleased to appoint. So that the preservation of a gospel ministry shall be coeval with the existence of the church of God upon earth, as the means of converting sinners to Christ, and promoting God's glory in their salvation. *How shall they believe on him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

They are God's messengers to the churches, and they are the glory of Christ. Their principal business is to set forth the glory of the Redeemer's person

son and mediation, and of the divine perfections, as displayed *in the face of Jesus Christ*. They are persons by whom Christ glorifieth himself. For *we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*. And the glory of God is to be their great end in all their ministrations, 1 Pet. iv. 11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God:—that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

3. The work of a scripture-bishop is a good work, because the principal end of it, next to the glory of God, is the spiritual and eternal good of mens souls. It must be a good work to *convert a sinner from the error of his way, and so save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins*.

Since the first Adam brake covenant with God, all his posterity come into this world guilty and corrupted, under the curse of the law, and liable to fall under the weight of everlasting wrath. The gospel discovers the method of infinite wisdom and grace, for having them delivered from this horrible condition, and restored to the favour, to the image, and to the enjoyment of God. For this purpose, gospel ministers are to preach it, that *he that believeth, may be saved*. They are to proclaim Christ, *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins*. They are to tell guilty men, that *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the Son of man lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life*. They are the servants of the Most High God, whom he hath sent to shew unto men the way of salvation.

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The office of the ministry, therefore, is connected with the best interests of mankind. Their work refers unto the welfare of their souls. And hence the souls of their people are committed to their care, according to that forecited text in Heb. xiii. 17. What an important charge is this! One soul is of so much greater value than the whole world, that our Lord observes, that a man would be a great *loser*, though *he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul*. The *redemption* of it is so *precious*, that all creatures together could not effectuate it; and yet the soul itself is so precious, that the eternal God condescended to become incarnate, and to *lay down his life* for its *ransom*.

Ministers have the oversight of those souls, which God accounts so valuable. *The Holy Ghost hath made them overseers of that flock, which God purchased with his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. For the salvation of this flock, they are to *labour in word and doctrine*; they are to feed them with the wholesome words of divine truth; they are to warn them of their dangers, to fortify them against temptations, to reprove and rebuke them for their errors and wanderings, to encourage their hearts in the righteous ways of the Lord, and, in short, to *guide in the wilderness like a flock*, as God did Israel by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

It is, therefore, *a good work* to others, and it cannot but be comfortable work to gospel ministers themselves, when they have charitable ground to believe, that persons are brought to the saving knowledge of Christ, by their instrumentality,—when they can say of their people, as Paul said of the Corinthians, *As my beloved sons, I warn you: for*
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though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel, 1 Cor. iv. 14, 15.

4. That this is a good work, because there is full security for all necessary support in it, and such a degree of success as the Lord is pleased to appoint. We would reckon that a good employment, in which persons have the best company, the most effectual assistance, and the richest reward. There is no work preferable to that of the ministry, in these respects. As the Lord employs them in it, they are assured of his gracious presence. They are *workers together with God*. The Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Prophet, Priest, and King of the church, has the ministry, the oversight, and the management of all her affairs in his hand. He is *the chief shepherd*, and the prime minister in the house of God. Those, who act under him with singleness and sincerity, shall not want his presence and assistance. When he calls new *labourers into his harvest*, he promiseth to be the same to them, that ever he was to his servants formerly. He comforts them as he did Joshua, saying, *As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee: Be strong, and of a good courage.* It was among the last, but not the least of the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, immediately before his ascension; *Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.*

This work of the Lord is, no doubt, of great magnitude and importance. The gospel minister will often find himself constrained to say, as Paul, *Who is sufficient for these things?* But he has the same encouragement in the promise, which the apostle

apostle had: *My grace is sufficient for thee.* He has the very same grace and strength, the same omnipotent arm to trust to, that Paul and his brethren had. And, therefore, under a sense of his own weakness, he is not to faint, but to encourage himself in the Lord his God, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament.*

There are various difficulties and discouragements which a minister of the gospel must lay his account with. He may have sometimes a large share of these, which may be known to none but himself. He may be often diffculted in his studies. He may be at a loss what subject to choose. The whole Bible may seem to be a shut book to him, and he can scarcely find a passage, which he can venture with to his people, as God's message to them. There is great difficulty in preaching the word suitably to the various cases of hearers. It is possible to preach sound doctrine, and yet come far short in this point. It is not easy to *divide the word of truth rightly*, and *give to every one his portion of meat in due season.* Sometimes intricate cases of conscience may be laid before him, which, without that wisdom which is from above, he cannot solve. He will often have occasion to observe some sinners hardening under the means of grace, and even those, who may be presumed to be saints, declining greatly, as to the true spirit and life of godliness. He may find great difficulties in acting between his people. He may be tried by grudges and animosities among them against one another, or jealousies among the eldership,—Satan thus endeavouring to rend what a faithful minister

nister would wish to be one in the Lord.—A variety of such trials and discouragements may lie in his way. But, after all, his work is *a good work*, for the Lord hath promised to *make darkness light before him, and crooked things straight*. When his *afflictions abound*, his *consolation by Christ shall much more abound*.

5. This is a good work, as it is a truly honourable work. The Apostle Paul esteemed it to be the greatest honour and dignity to which he could be exalted on the earth. Hence he speaks of it with gratitude, chap. 1st of this epistle, ver. 12. *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry*. He highly esteemed his office, although both it and himself were vilified by the multitude in that day, Rom. xi. 13. *In as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office*.

It must be honourable, since it is an office of divine authority, and an office in Christ's kingdom, which is spiritual and heavenly. Ministers are *his servants, his stewards, and rulers in his house*. Men reckon it an honour to be employed as the ambassadors of earthly princes, to represent their persons, and carry their messages. Gospel-ministers are the ambassadors, and messengers of the Lord of hosts. They can address church-members, as Ehud did the king of Moab, when he said, *I have a message from God unto thee, O king*.

It is a great honour to be instrumental in the conversion of sinners to God, of *pulling them out of the fire*, and calling them into Christ by the gospel. Yet how much have his servants been honoured this way in former times? His servants now have the

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same grounds to expect his blessing upon their labours. If they be faithful, they shall never have to say altogether, *We have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought.*

They are the *soldiers of Jesus Christ*. It is their honour to fight his battles, in opposition to Satan and sin, error and wickedness, in the hearts of men, and in the world. They have these powerful foes to grapple with, but they must learn to *endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ*. By their God assisting them they shall break through troops. Under his banner they shall be blessed with success and victory. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. Satan's kingdom shall fall to the ground as lightning.*

There is an honourable reward awaiting them at last, 1 Pet. v. 2, 4. *Feed the flock of God which is among you,—and, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* It will be no small honour to the faithful minister, when, through the merit and grace of the Redeemer, he shall be brought to glory, with those in whose conversion and edification he was made instrumental, 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.* Dan. xii. 3. *They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.*—We now proceed,

IV. To speak of the right desire of this office and work. *If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

I. Such

1. Such a desire supposes the saving knowledge of Christ, and interest in him. There can be no right desires to serve him in any station, or in any duty, while a person continues estranged from him. We grant, that graceless persons may come forward, in the course of divine providence, to be employed in the work of the ministry. And we are no more bound to account for this, than we are for Christ's employing Judas, whom he knew to be a *traitor*, John xiii. 11. But no person can have any right desire to serve Christ in this *good work*, without the saving knowledge of him. God was *pleased to call Paul by his grace*, and *reveal his Son in him*, and thus he *straightway preached in the synagogues*, that *Jesus is the Son of God*.

It is necessary, at least, for preachers themselves, that they have the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, in order to their being employed in this service. What good may be done by the ministrations of graceless men, we cannot tell. But, to serve a God, whom we know not,—to preach a Jesus, whom we reject,—and to point out the necessity of a regeneration and salvation, which we have never experienced,—must be very strange work. To study the mysteries of grace with success, to open up what *the angels desire to look into*, and to instruct men in *the manifold wisdom of God*, it is necessary that persons themselves be *taught of God*, and that *these things be revealed unto them*, not by *flesh and blood*, but by *our Father who is in heaven*. Without this, the mysteries of grace must appear foolishness to themselves, and their work, instead of being *good* to them, will be burdensome and unpleasant.

2. A right desire of this office supposes a proper understanding of the duties of it, or, of *that work*, which is *desired*. No person can fill any station to a good purpose, if he is ignorant of what belongs to it. In order to right desires for the ministry, and to a proper discharge of it, it is of the last importance rightly to take up the great ends and purposes, for which our Lord invests persons with the character of his *ambassadors*, his *stewards*, his *servants in the gospel*. How many are the duties of such a station? How various and important? It is necessary that persons take up this *calling* in scripture-light, and have their consciences impressed with the duties they should discharge. They may see the glory of Christ connected with the character they bear, no less than the everlasting salvation or perdition of men. They should understand the different branches of their work, whether respecting doctrine, worship, government, or discipline, and see every part of it to be interesting and important.

There are many in the world, who enter on this office, destitute of any proper knowledge of it, and who never take up the design of the character they bear, nor attend to the proper business of the ministry. It is no wonder, in such a case, that they act in that office, to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of many precious souls. For a right understanding of the duties of that station, which a gospel-minister fills, it is absolutely necessary to a conscientious discharge of them.

3. In a word, when persons rightly desire this office, their great ends are the glory of God, and the good of mens souls. The first of these is to be our chief end in all our conduct. *Whether we eat or drink,*

or whatsoever we do, we ought to do all to the glory of God.

How mean and wicked are the ends which, we have reason to fear, many have in view, in desiring to be put into the ministry? To get a settlement for life, to eat a piece of bread, to appear respectable in the world, to have the favour of the great, are the objects many aim at. Popularity is the object which many pursue, more than the glory of Christ. To be esteemed and run after by the people, is the idol set up in the soul. When such is the case, persons are ready to sacrifice every thing that is really precious, in order to obtain their favourite object. They are ever in danger of relinquishing or burying divine truths, if it may turn out to their advantage. As the pretended mother of the living child said concerning it, so do such say concerning truth, *Let it be neither mine, nor thine, but divide it.*

But those, who are upright in their desires after this office, are chiefly concerned, that they may be useful in promoting the glory of God, and the good of his people. This is the habitual wish of their hearts. Whether they be in their closets, or in the pulpit, on the Sabbath, or through the week, it is their great study how they may best promote the Redeemer's glory, and be a blessing unto his church. How they shall preach most to the spiritual advantage of men; how they shall perform other parts of duty most to their edification; what degree of discipline will be most useful for them; how they shall most effectually be *the helpers of their joy*;—these are the things which lie near their hearts. Their fervent wish and constant aim, is, that Christ may be glorified in the gathering of sinners to him.

self by their means, and that, in the great day of accounts, they may have to say, each for himself, *Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me?*

We shall conclude this discourse, by mentioning these two inferences only.

1. Hence see, what an important and difficult station a minister of the gospel occupies. It is *a good work*, but many are the duties belonging to it, many are the trials that may be met with in it, and many are the enemies to a faithful discharge of it. It is opposed by all *the powers of darkness*, by wicked men, by carnal and loose church-members, and by the corruption in the minister's own heart. It is a wonder, then, that any are enabled to be faithful, and that all are not left to betray the trust committed to them.

2. Hence see, that it is a great blessing to enjoy a faithful ministry. Is it *a good work* which the scripture-bishop is employed in? then it must be a good thing for a people to have such an one set over them in the Lord. It is the accomplishment of exceeding great and precious promises, such as that, *I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding*. An erroneous and unfaithful ministry is a great curse unto a people. *The leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed*, Isa. ix. 16. But it is a blessing to have a minister, who is found in the faith, single and honest, zealous and prudent,—one who has the qualifications of a bishop described in the following context, and who comes into his office *by the door*,

which

which the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed. Such an one, we are charitably to believe, is sent by the Lord; and then we have ground to expect, that the Lord *will send by the hand of him whom he doth send.*

Let all be concerned to be thankful for the gospel and the ordinances of it, and that the Lord hath appointed, and still maintains a standing gospel ministry, to dispense them in the church. It is matter of praise, that the exalted Redeemer *gave gifts unto men, and, particularly, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* Let each be concerned, since the work of the ministry is so good, that it may be blessed to them for beginning a good work within them, Phil. i. 6. For this purpose, look to God, in earnest prayer and supplication, for his blessing upon it. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase.* We must look above all the under shepherds to the *chief Shepherd*, for the success of the gospel. It is he who gives energy to the gospel, and causeth it to come to souls, *not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.*

ADDRESS

ADDRESS

TO THE

Rev. Mr M'CRIE, after his Ordination.

DEAR BROTHER,

YOU are now invested with an office, that is sacred in its nature, and, as to its ends and consequences, of vast importance. Though it is a good work you are to be employed in, yet the duties belonging to it are many, and the difficulties which are to be met with, in a conscientious discharge of it, are considerable. I would, as is usual on such occasions, suggest a very few things unto you.

Your being invested with the ministerial office, I would look upon as a special call in providence, to examine with care into the state of your own soul. When we find Nicodemus, *a master in Israel*, ignorant of the new birth, and such an apostle, as Paul was, expressing a concern, lest, *when he preached the gospel to others, he himself should be a castaway*; how concerned should we be, that Christ be formed in us. If ministers of the glorious gospel of our salvation do perish, there is no doubt, that their punishment will be as unparalleled as their guilt. Whereas, if we ourselves are acquainted with the grace of God in truth, we will have a relish for the doctrines of the gospel, and will be able, from experience, to point out the necessity of a Saviour, and the precious excellency of his grace. How comfortable is it to have to say to the people, as the apostles

apostles had, *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.*

We hope, that the duties of your office have for some time past been revolved in your mind, and have occasioned matter of prayer before the Lord. We hope, that it has been in the way of essaying humiliation and prayer, that you have ventured this length. Be entreated to persevere in this course. It is in the way of prevailing with heaven, that you can expect to be successful in the ministry, and to prevail with the people to turn unto the Lord.

You know that diligence in preparation for public service is our duty, when time is in our power. We ought not to distrust our Master, when we are called to preach on a short warning; but neither are we to neglect preparation, when proper time is afforded. It is impious to rest in our preparations, as if we were *sufficient of ourselves*; but it is also a mocking of God to seek his aid, when we have time for preparation, and yet neglect to improve it.

In preaching the glorious gospel, it is hoped, that you will have no respect of persons, that you will deal plainly with all in the name of the Lord. You will keep back no doctrine which God hath revealed, omit to press no duty which he hath prescribed, and spare no sin that he hath forbidden. You will not *shun to declare all the counsel of God*, that when you come to close this ministry which you have received, you may have to say with the apostle, when he was leaving the Ephesians, *I am pure from the blood of all men.*—But while you are thus, as you have opportunity, to *teach all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded*, it is hoped that, at whatever time, or in whatever place, you are called to preach, the doctrine

doctrine of a free salvation to sinners, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, to the praise of divine grace, will be, as it were, the centre of all your sermons, and that the motto, proper for the whole of your public ministrations and more private instructions, may still be, *Christ is all and in all*. The doctrine of *Jesus Christ and him crucified*, is the great substance of the gospel. It is matter of lamentation, that it is seldom or never heard of from many pulpits, and that it is a tasteless and offensive doctrine to a giddy, carnal, and graceless world. But this should be so far from discouraging us from preaching it, that it ought to have the contrary effect, because it is a proof that the doctrine is divine. If the doctrine of a free and full salvation, through the mediation of the eternal Son of God, were popular with the men of this world, we would have reason to suspect its divinity; for *the world loveth its own*. But this doctrine being of God, therefore *the world hateth it*, and, for the same reason, we ought to love it. *We preach Christ crucified*, said Paul, *unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness*. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the subject that we should chiefly dwell upon. It will never turn stale to a gracious soul. We should never be wearied, either of preaching, or of hearing on earth, about that grand and glorious subject, of which the redeemed from among men are singing for ever in heaven. The burden of their song is, *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood*.

You know, Brother, that, as to our manner of preaching the gospel of Christ, we are bound to study plainness and simplicity. The gospel does not need gaudy

gaily ornaments to render it worthy of esteem. Its beauty and excellency is intrinsic. It is *in itself*, and not in any mode of dressing it that men may attempt. We should at any rate study always to accommodate ourselves to the meanest of our hearers, and to speak in such a manner as the plainest Christian may understand us. This will give no offence to persons of real good sense, although they themselves may be well acquainted with, what are reckoned, the modern improvements of language. There are, no doubt, too many hearers, who pay more attention to the manner in which you say things, than to the things that are said; and such will be ready to fret and find fault, if you do not adopt all the modern refinements in language and pronunciation. However much you should pity these persons, yet you should despise their opinion. They are but the weaklings of the flock, that will find fault with you for speaking to your own countrymen, in your own country dialect.

You know that, after the closest preparation and most conscientious ministrations, all your success depends upon the Redeemer's blessing. Without it, *Paul may plant, and Apollos water*, in vain. Let your people have a large share in your prayers, that, while you preach, the *Lord may open their hearts to attend to the things that are spoken*. Praying persons you will find to be the pillars of the congregation. Remember them in your prayers. And, O what need have graceless persons, or secure Christians, of your laying their case before the Lord! You will find it for your interest, before preaching, to be earnest that the Lord go along with you; and it is no less

less your duty, after it, to be concerned that the Lord may bless it.

You will need to have your eye constantly upon your flock, and to observe whatever scandalous behaviour may be taking place among them. This you will often find very difficult, and, I suppose, always the most disagreeable part of your work. In proportion as you are exercised to godliness, persons that are often irregular, will be a burden on your spirits, as they are a dead weight on the interests of religion. But fear not to be faithful in the exercise of discipline. Fear not the consequences of being steady and impartial. A holy discipline is the sword of Christ, and it will *cut off* the *troublers* of the church only, Gal. v. 12. Though you are not wantonly to use the censures which our Lord Jesus Christ hath instituted, yet you are not to spare the untender and the obstinate. *Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all authority; let no man despise thee.*

Study that your life correspond with your doctrine, and that you may be a living example of its energy and influence. Be not as some, whose daily practice and behaviour is so opposite to the spirit of the gospel, as to convince others that they preach doctrines which they do not believe. *But thou, O man of God! flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*

You need much prudence to direct you, as to your behaviour among your people. Your words will be noticed, and your actions observed. Intimacy with one will sometimes be offensive to another. Prudence will teach you to be affable to all, and to set a watch before the door of your mouth, that enemies

may

may be ashamed, when even malice itself can find no evil to say of you.

And in a word, Dear Brother, both you and I, and all of us, should constantly bear in mind that solemn and important day, when we must give an account of our stewardship. We should do every thing with an eye to it. Let us not say, *Our Lord delayeth his coming*, and turn careless and unfaithful. Let the day of his glorious appearing the second time, without sin, unto salvation, have a place in your doctrine, and be often in your mind. In the mean time, view yourself consecrated to God, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and be faithful in his service, till he shall be pleased to call you from the field.—I shall only read two passages of Scripture. 2 Tim. iv. 1.—5. *I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.* 1 Pet. v. 1.—4. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock;*

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flock : And, when the CHIEF SHEPHERD shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

ADDRESS

TO THE CONGREGATION.

MY FRIENDS,

YOU have this day witnessed the ordination of the object of your choice among you, as a minister of the glorious gospel of Christ, and as your minister in particular. You have heard somewhat of the great and important service which is incumbent on him to God, to you, and to the church. I would also say a few things to you on this occasion.

I cannot omit putting you in mind, that you had a former minister *; at least, a considerable number of you, in connection with the other congregation in this city, had a minister,—one eminent for a great variety of gifts, while he was in the church militant, and who, we have no doubt, is now entered into his Master's joy. He has given an account of his stewardship. Many, who were once under his ministrations, have also given an account of the improvement they made of them. And all of you, who were once under his charge, must do the same. You must, before the Great Tribunal, give an account of what attendance you gave on that ministry, what effect it had on you, and how you profited by the va-

* The Reverend Mr ADAM GIB, who laboured in the work of the gospel above 47 years, in the Associate Congregation of Edinburgh, being ordained April 2. 1741. and died June 18. 1788.

rious truths which were delivered to you in the name of the Lord.—You are just now entering upon the enjoyment of a new ministry; and I must call every one of you, on such an occasion, to look back and examine what effect the former has had upon you. If it has left you deeper in guilt than when you came to be placed under it, how dreadful is your condition, especially if you continue to slight and despise the renewed entreaties of the Son of God by his servants. If you have improved the former ministry, so as to have obtained saving benefit by it, then this should be a joyful day to you, because, although you have changed ministers, yet *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*. You may expect that your souls shall still be fed in the ordinances of his grace, and that you shall *go on your way rejoicing*.

It is a solemn matter to call a minister of the gospel, and to enter upon the enjoyment of such privileges. If you have done this, trusting to your own judgments, without fasting and prayer for the Lord's direction and blessing, and without fear and trembling, lest the Lord should blast his ministry among you, the prospect appears dark. We would not wish to limit divine sovereignty, but if you have not been essaying some such suitable exercise, there is reason to fear that awful sentence, *Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*. Be assured, the means of grace will have effect one way or other. They will either be *the savour*

of life unto life, or the favour of death unto death. But, Brethren, we hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

I would earnestly exhort you to let your minister have a particular place in your prayers. Let this congregation unite around JEHOVAH's throne, supplicating those blessings on him, as a Christian, and as a minister, which he stands in need of. The advantages of this we cannot enumerate. It will be one of the strongest ties of affection between you and him. It will be a mean of giving a relish to his sermons, when you get an answer of your prayers in that channel. Above all, the prayers of his people will be his greatest support. You may look for him to come forth to you with messages of grace and answers of prayer in his mouth. No abilities nor books, are such helps to a minister, as a praying people, who dare not go to God's throne forgetting him. I would charge you, therefore, as you would expect a blessing on his ministrations, not to let one day pass over you, without striving in your prayers to God for him. It is a sure sign of a graceless or declining people, when a ministry in general, and their own minister in particular, are little remembered in their prayers.

I would exhort you to give a conscientious and punctual attendance upon his ministry. As his acceptance of your call binds him to preach to you, so your giving and subscribing it binds you to attend. We know that it is too common, especially in this city, for persons to reckon that they do well, if they are in the church one part of the day. If there are no persons among you of this opinion and practice,

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we shall rejoice. But remember, that you should allow nothing to keep you from gospel ordinances, but such reasons as, you are convinced, will be sustained at the judgment seat of Christ. Nor is it enough, that you attend in the place of worship. Remember that you are in the house of God, and therefore study that a careless inattention and offensive drowsiness, under the means of grace, may be wholly banished from among you. Think seriously, that the word of God shall not fall to the ground.

I would exhort you to be tender of your minister's character. As his office is sacred, so his person is entitled to respect. Make him not *an offender for a word*. Believe not every whisper that malice may circulate. Study that charity *which thinketh no evil*. Well grounded complaints, we hope, you will never have occasion for.

Be careful not to encroach upon his time. It is not his own; it is devoted to God, and to you. What you may mean as a kindness to him, may be an injury to the whole congregation, by encroaching upon his hours of preparation. I do not mean by this, that persons should stay back, when any business renders converse with him necessary. But unnecessary visits are often an injury to a minister. It is a common, though groundless, opinion with many, that if they do not come on Saturday, they think there is no hazard of incommoding their minister; as if any minister would, either in conscience or inclination, be idle the other days of the week. To be interrupted in closet study is a trial, that it is hardly possible for the people to understand.

Endeavour, my Brethren, to live in love and peace with one another. When variances take place

between the members of a congregation, they mar the growth of religion exceedingly, and they cannot but be a heavy and vexatious burden upon the mind of a conscientious minister. Bear in mind the apostle's words, in Gal. v. 13, 14, 15. *By love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* Attend also to what he says in Phil. ii. 1, 2. *If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

Above all things, Brethren, remember that the greatest kindness you can do to your minister, is to receive God's message by him. Receive him as *the messenger of the Lord of hosts*. When a people are improving the gospel, and growing under the means of grace, there is no reason to fear, but they will make conscience of all the duties they owe to their minister. Their love to Jesus Christ will manifest itself in love to his servant, and will dispose them to strain every nerve to make his situation among them as comfortable as possible, and to *esteem him highly in love for his works sake*. It is only when Christ and his gospel are little thought of, and much undervalued, that a people fail in their regard for and attention to their minister's welfare and comfort. When the Master is despised, his servant cannot expect to be esteemed or regarded, for *the servant is not above his Lord*.—If you would, therefore, have a due respect and affection for your minister, O study to regard God's message by him. Remember that he

seeks

seeks not yours, but you. And his ministry will be lost upon you, if it is not a mean of bringing you to give yourselves to Christ. Like Abraham's servant, he is sent to seek a spouse for God's eternal Son; and the language of all his ministrations to each of you will be, *Wilt thou go with this man? All things are ready, Come unto the marriage.* Pray for grace to enable you to close with the call; that so your minister may have the comfort of saying with the apostle, *I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,* 2 Cor. xi. 2.

Study steadfastness in your profession, and holiness in all manner of conversation. Endeavour to learn and improve by the waverings, wanderings, and falls of others. The devil never loved the cause of Christ, or its friends. But, in the present time, he seems to manifest his malice and rancour against them, in a very remarkable manner, and is permitted to lay various snares for entrapping the professors of religion. There is great need to *be steadfast and immoveable.* Beware of a wavering and frothy disposition. Beware of indulging a vain curiosity, by the least degree of unsteadfastness in your Christian profession. For by gratifying your curiosity, you gradually blind your conscience, and, God only knows, where you may stop. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* —I shall have done by reading a few passages of Scripture to you. Heb. ii. 1.—3. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*
For

For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. Heb. iv. 1, 2. 12, 13. Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 2 Thess. iii. 1.—5. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

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S E R M O N IX.

CHRIST, THE LAMB OF GOD, WAS PROVIDED
FOR A BURNT-OFFERING*.

GEN. xxii. 8.

—*God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.*—

THIS chapter contains an account of the remarkable trial that God made of Abraham's faith. By the grace of God he was a man singular for his faith. He had given a proof of it formerly, when he *forsook his own people and his father's house* at God's call, and came into a land which he knew not. But now God would have his faith put to a farther trial. He did not need to do so, in order to ascertain to himself the strength of his servant's grace. He knew the degree of it, and how it would stand the trial. But he tried it, that the strength of it might be manifested to his own glory, that Abraham's faith might improve by the trial, and that an example of strong faith might be set before his people in all time coming.

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* This sermon was preached at Haddington, October 9. 1796, immediately before the dispensation of the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper.

The mode, in which God was pleased to try him on this occasion, appears to be very singular, ver. 2. *He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* Every circumstance here is fraughted with affliction.—It is *his son* whom he is called to *take*. This was altogether against nature. A man is naturally disposed to spare his son. God himself makes use of this as a figure, in representing his own care and tenderness for his people, Mal. iii. 16, 17. *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day, when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*—He is *his only Isaac*. He had at least another son, Ishmael. But he is spared. Abraham has no such order concerning him. The son of the bond woman escapes, and the life of his beloved Isaac must go for it. Now this was the *child of promise*, respecting whom God had said, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*—But what is he to do with this son? Is he to chastise him, to banish him out of his sight, and to disinherit him? Even this would have been very hard indeed. But he must go a great deal farther than this. He must *offer him for a burnt-offering*. That son must be put to death, and consumed upon God's altar.—But who then must do this? May not Abraham employ another to shed the blood of his own son? Shall the father be obliged to destroy the fruit of his own body? “Yes; *take thou thy son, and offer thou him.* This service thou must perform thyself. “I am determined to know whether thou believest “that I am able to fulfil my promise, even although “thy

“ thy beloved Isaac should die by thy hand, and
“ whether thou lovest me more than him.”

From verse 3d and downwards, we have an account of the proof which Abraham gave of his faith, by yielding ready obedience to the divine command. Whatever struggles he might have with his own natural affection, yet his faith and love to God overcame all obstacles, and led him on to take the necessary steps for fulfilling God's will, without *conferring with flesh and blood.* *And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son: and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day, Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide you here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son: and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife: and they went both of them together.*

In these verses, we perceive the portrait of a man, who took God's will for the reason and rule of his conduct, and who, as it were, laid his understanding, his will, and his affections, at God's feet. It is not possible that Abraham, or any other man in his situation, could understand or know how God's promise, of extending his posterity in the line of Isaac, could be accomplished, if that very person should be reduced to ashes upon an altar, before he had any seed. But though the manner of the accomplishment was dark and mysterious, the fact of it was certain and clear to the Patriarch's faith. He did
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not, for a moment, hesitate, whether God's promise would stand good or not? He did not either think or say, *Doth his promise fail for evermore?* It is not to be supposed, that such a godly man, and an affectionate father, could have any natural will or inclination to embrue his hands in the blood of his son. Every human and tender feeling forbade a deed, which seemed to be so unnatural and cruel. Beyond all doubt, he would have spared Isaac sooner than any other. But here we find his gracious will inclining him to act conformably to the sovereign will of his God. It is a lively instance of sincere and hearty obedience, flowing from a genuine principle of faith. This disposes a person to do the duty, which God requires, without seeking after any other,—any higher reason for it, than *Thus saith the Lord.*

Abraham believed that he was *faithful who had promised.* His faith in that promise was victorious, and carried him on to obey God, over the belly of all difficulties, arising from present feelings, or future prospects. Thus the apostle describes it in Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son: of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

In verses 7th and 8th, we have a part of the conversation which passed between Abraham and his son, while they were going forward to the place of sacrifice. *And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my*

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son. *And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* This was a very proper and important question. It intimated, that Isaac was deeply concerned, as well as his father, about the worship and service of God. He was careful that it should be performed with propriety, and that nothing should be wanting thereunto. And here he saw the principal thing amiss. *Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?*—It seems evident, that Abraham had not informed Isaac of all the particulars of the divine command which he had received. The bowels of a father might prevent him from rendering his son's mind uneasy, sooner than was necessary. And, doubtless, the question, which was proposed by Isaac, was a severe shock to his paternal feelings, when he considered, that the very person who put the question,—*his only Isaac, whom he greatly loved*,—was *the lamb* which, for ought he yet knew, was to be offered up.

In the words of our text, we have the answer which the godly Patriarch gave to this question. *And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.* He still cautiously conceals from Isaac the divine command, and his own present design. But his answer contained a very comfortable truth, that, when God requires sacrifice, there is no reason to fear that a lamb shall be wanting. He will always provide for his own service. He calls none to *go a warfare any time at his own charges*, nor does he require men to serve him with any thing that is not his own. Wherever he appoints the ordinances of his worship to be dispensed, he will see to have them maintained. Every thing needful shall be furnished. *The Lord*

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will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.— This was a farther proof of the Patriarch's strong faith. It intimated his firm resolution to do as God had commanded him. God should not want a lamb, so long as Abraham had *an Isaac*. Rather than God's altar on Moriah should want a sacrifice to smoke upon it, he would *not withhold his son, his only beloved son.*

It doth not appear, that Abraham, at this time, had any certainty that Isaac should be preserved from slaughter. The Lord hid this from him, till his faith was tried to the very uttermost, to speak so,—till Isaac was bound, *laid on the altar upon the wood*, and the father's firm and determined arm stretched out to slay his son. But whether the holy Patriarch might have had some hope, that God would interpose, and make provision of a sacrifice, instead of Isaac, is not certain. Thus, however, it turned out, as we read in the sequel. He was seasonably prevented from the execution of his purpose. He had obeyed God's command fully *in design*, and the solidity and strength of his faith had been sufficiently manifested, and, therefore, Isaac is spared, and a lamb actually provided for a burnt-offering. The Lord said, *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering, in the stead of his son.*

This part of Scripture-history, like the other parts of God's word, was written for our learning. Isaac

himself

himself was, no doubt, an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the only beloved son of his father. He had been guilty of no crime, to deserve the tragical death, which was designed for him. He carried the wood by which he was to be consumed upon the altar. He was to die by the command of God, and by the hand of his own father. In all these, and other circumstances, we may see a strong resemblance between him and our Lord Jesus Christ, the true *propitiation for our sins*. But we mean not to insist upon these at this time.

It is the answer which Abraham gave to Isaac's question, which we propose to take some view of, by considering the important and interesting truth contained in it. Isaac's question implies the necessity of a burnt-offering. God had so required. This made it necessary. But *where is the lamb?* says Isaac.—And, if a proper, truly-atoning, and meritorious sacrifice be necessary, for expiating the guilt of an elect world, for appeasing the Divine Majesty, opening up a vent to his mercy, and procuring salvation for sinful men, where shall such a sacrifice be found? *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall we give our first-born for our transgressions, and the fruit of our bodies for the sins our souls?* No; but to such questions the answer is ready, in the words of Abraham, *The Lord will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering*. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the blessed antitypical Lamb, which God hath provided, for making atonement for the sins of the people. And we cannot but think, that Abraham's eye was turned to this *Lamb*, as the great substance of those sacrifices which he, by divine warrant, offered up

unto God; and that, in the very uttering of the words before us, his faith was contemplating the true and proper sacrifice of Christ. He was not ignorant that *God had found a ransom*,—that he had a lamb provided in his eternal purpose, and that this lamb would be actually provided, and offered as a burnt-offering, in the fulness of time. He *rejoiced to see Christ's day*, though it was a distant day from his; *and he saw it, and was glad*.

As Christ was the great substance typified by all the Old Testament sacrifices, so we are, chiefly, to consider him as the Lamb of God's providing,—*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*. And we may turn Abraham's words from the future, into the past time, and say, *That God hath provided a Lamb for a burnt-offering*.—In discoursing from this text, with a special reference to Jesus Christ, whose death we are met to commemorate, in the Sacrament of his Supper, we may;

I. Consider, more particularly, what God hath provided, *a Lamb*;

II. Speak of the designed use of this Lamb, or the purpose, for which it was provided, *for a burnt-offering*;

III. Speak of God's *providing* this Lamb; and then conclude with some inferences.—
We are,

I. To consider, more particularly, what God hath provided, *a Lamb*.

There were various creatures to be used in sacrifice, according to divine authority. These were all typical of that *one offering*, by which Christ *hath* perfected

perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Among other creatures, we find, that lambs were frequently made use of. Abel brought the firstlings of his flock; and offered them unto the Lord. A lamb was to be used in the passover. And we are also told, that these creatures were to be used in the morning and evening sacrifices. That our Lord Jesus Christ was prefigured and typified by these is very evident, and particularly, from his being often called *the Lamb, the Lamb of God, and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* Several things are hereby taught us, a few of which we may mention.

1. The lamb to be used for a burnt-offering was one of the flock, and chosen out of it for that purpose. This may intimate unto us, the near connection between our Lord Jesus Christ and the guilty race, which was to be redeemed unto God by his blood. Though, as to his divine person, he is the true JEHOVAH,—God over all, yet, as to his human nature, he belongs to the family of Adam. He is one of the flock of mankind. Hence he is said to have been chosen from among them, Psal. lxxxix. 19. *Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* They were all as a flock of sheep gone astray, and had turned every one to his own way, and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of them all. He was chosen, as one out of the flock, to become a burnt-offering for the offences of God's elected ones. He was nearly related to the human family, in having a nature taken from it, Heb. ii. 14. *For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.* And hereby a regard was

manifested to the strictest justice, since the nature, which was made a burnt-offering for sinners, was their own common nature. The person who died in their room is not *ashamed to call them brethren*. For, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, Heb. ii. 11, 17.

2. The lamb is an innocent and harmless creature, and was one of the clean beasts, according to the ceremonial law. This may point out unto us the spotless purity and innocence of the great Antitype. To this purpose the apostle expresses himself, in 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. *We were redeemed—with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*. It behoved him to be so, in order to his making atonement for the sins of others. *Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*, Heb. vii. 26. No sinner could satisfy for the sins of other men. His own guiltiness would render him incapable of standing in God's sight, as the representative of others. He, who would make atonement for the crimes of his neighbours, must himself be unstained by any guilt, and one against whom God has no charge to bring on his own account. This was true of the Redeemer. Though he lay under a load of imputed guilt, as a substitute in the room of others, yet he was absolutely without any personal stain. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. It was impossible that he could have any sin, as he is the Son of God, the second person

person in the Godhead. And he had no sin, as to his manhood. He had no original pollution, though he was the Son of man, because he was not represented in the first Adam, and did not come into the world by ordinary generation, but had his holy human nature miraculously conceived in the womb of a virgin, Luke i. 35. Not being originally guilty, it was impossible that he could become actually so, considering that his humanity for ever subsists in union to his divine person. Therefore the apostle says 1 John iii. 5. *Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

3. The lamb is a meek and patient creature under all its sufferings. It murmurs not under very painful treatment, nor attempts to resent the most cruel usage. Meekness and patience shine forth most conspicuously in the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence a prophet said, Isa. liii. 7. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.* And, said Jesus himself, in Matth. xi. 29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.* Moses, who is set forth as remarkable for meekness,—who was very meek, above all the men which were on the face of the earth,—betrayed, nevertheless, some bitterness of spirit, when he met with contradiction, and he spake unadvisedly with his lips. But learn of me, says Christ, for I am meek, truly and perfectly so. Never one had more reason for resentment than he, as none ever met with so much unmerited abuse, while in the world. Yet, far from rendering railing for railing, or stripe for stripe, he pitied and prayed for his enemies,

enemies, 1 Pet. ii. 23. *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

Behold his patience under all his sufferings, and you see the silent and submissive Lamb of God! *As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* He opened it to pray about himself, about his people, and even about his persecutors; but he opened it not to murmur or complain, or express the least impatient affection, in all the course of his sufferings. He was perfectly resigned to his Father's will, and never uttered a discontented or peevish word, under all the hard treatment he met with. Though he was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, yet he never fretted, nor charged God foolishly. Even Job, that mirror of patience, under the pressure of trouble, *choosed strangling and death, rather than life.* He wished the day might perish in which he was born, and the night in which it was said, *a man-child is conceived.* But Christ rejoiced in view of his birth, although he knew it would introduce him into a world, where he would meet with multiplied and unparalleled troubles. Through the course of an oppressed, afflicted, and sorrowful life, he murmured not, but cheerfully submitted to the will of his Father, saying, *Not my will, but thine be done.* This patience shone most remarkably in the last, and most trying stage of his life, when he was betrayed, arraigned, condemned, and crucified,—when he was tormented by men, tempted by devils, deserted and punished by his Father. Yet under all these inconceivable sufferings, he murmured not, nor threatened, but committed

committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. He thus displayed meekness and patience peculiar to himself.

4. That the lamb, though harmless and inoffensive, is ready to become the prey of many wild beasts. This is very expressive of Christ's condition in our world. There was a general consternation and alarm through the devil's kingdom, when he was born. *When Herod the king heard that he was born King of the Jews, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, Matth. ii. 3.* A persecution was raised against him by Herod, who sought the young child's life to take it away. As he came more into public view, his enemies multiplied, and became more open and avowed in their opposition to him. *Of a truth, against the holy child Jesus, whom God had anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.* He had to complain, *They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.* Though he was the innocent Lamb of God, who did no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth, yet he was hunted and pursued to death by men worse than the wild beasts of the forest. He was as a prey exposed to their rage and fury. Justly were his persecutors represented as a parcel of brutish and cruel dogs, of impetuous raging bulls, and ravenous lions, *Psal. xxii. 12, 13, 16. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion. Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and feet.*

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5. The lamb is a very useful creature, and more especially these which were used in sacrifice. They were of very great service, as making a ceremonial atonement for the sins of the people, and being as glasses, through which they might look by faith to the great atoning Sacrifice to be offered up in the fulness of time. The lamb that was used in the passover served for a twofold purpose. It was both a sacrifice and a feast. It was first to be slain as a sacrifice, and the blood to be sprinkled upon the lintels and side posts of the doors, and afterwards it was to be roasted and eaten. This, when duly considered, will be found to be strictly applicable to him whom God hath provided for a burnt-offering: Christ, the Lamb of God, is both a sacrifice for the sins of his people, and a feast for their souls. Hence the apostle says, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; Therefore let us keep the feast.*

With respect to his being a sacrifice in our stead, it will fall to be spoken of upon the next head of discourse.—But as he was a sacrifice in the room of his people, so he is set forth to be fed upon by them. It is by this means that persons have any benefit from him. By laying hold upon him, in the exercise of faith, as a lamb offered for us, and to us, we get the benefit of the atonement which he hath made. This is what he calls *eating his flesh, and drinking his blood.* John vi. 54, 55. *Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* The discovery and improvement of Christ by faith, proves to be a most refreshing, strengthening, and comforting meal to the soul of a Christian. He is set before us in the gospel, that

that we may eat his flesh, and drink his blood, and live. And it is just this very Lamb that communicants are to feed upon at the sacramental table. In this ordinance, he, who was made a burnt-offering for us, is setting himself forth as a feast for our souls, and says, *This is my body; this is my blood of the new testament; eat; drink ye all of it.*—We proceed,

II. To speak of the designed use of this Lamb, or, the purpose for which it was provided, viz. for a burnt-offering. We mention a few things imported in this.

I. That the infinite JEHOVAH was highly offended against sinners of mankind. The necessity and use of burnt-offerings and sacrifices of every kind supposes this. They would be altogether unnecessary in themselves, and God would never have required them, if men were not sinners, and guilty of offending him. God warned innocent Adam of his displeasure against sin, when he fenced the law with that awful sanction, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 17. Though God loved him dearly, when he was an innocent and upright creature, made after his own image, yet should he become a sinner, the offence would be so great, that his life would be forfeited. And, when he actually sinned, the dreadful sentence was passed upon him, and all his posterity. Rom. v. 18. *By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.* Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* God, being infinitely holy, cannot but be displeased at sin, and resent it. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

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Men may think well of sin; *wickedness may be sweet in their mouths*, and they may *hide it under their tongues*; they may palliate their own sins, or the sins of others, and make such excuses for them, as, in their opinion, render them very small; but it is impossible that a holy God should not be displeased against every sin, as he cannot but see it in its native malignity, and intrinsic evil.

There is not a threatening in the Bible, that does not tell us, that God our Maker is grievously offended against us. It is on account of sin, that he reveals himself, in wrath and fury, as an avenger, and declares that he is *a consuming fire*, and that *it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands*, who is *the living God*. All his judgments upon sinners in this world are so many proofs of his displeasure against sin. Can we suppose that God would have made this world a *Bochim*,—a place of *weepers*,—that he would have brought such a multiplicity of troubles and calamities upon the human race,—if they had done nothing to *provoke the eyes of his glory*? No; *Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?* If you would know, whether sin be an offensive evil in the sight of God, look to the fruits of it upon the earth. Behold the burning flame and smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah towering up to heaven, like the smoke of a furnace, as a monument of God's justice against sin. See a flood of water sweeping away an ungodly race of men from the earth. And see distress and death coming in at the windows, and entering in to the palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. It is impossible to account for the equity and justice of these calamitous dispensations, but upon the principle

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ciple of God's being highly offended against sin and finners.

2. That Christ, the Lamb of God, being provided for a burnt-offering, imports, that God could not be pacified and reconciled, without sacrifice. Were it otherwise, we had never heard of sacrifices in the world. God could not need, and he could have no pleasure, to *eat the flesh of bulls, or to drink the blood of goats*. He could not have required the sufferings and death of any in the room of finners, if it had not been absolutely necessary, in order to the satisfaction of his justice, and to procure their salvation. He can demand nothing that is unnecessary, because such a demand would be unjust. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* When we consider the infinite evil of sin, as committed against God, who is infinitely holy, just, and faithful, it appears plain, that he could not overlook it, and extend mercy to finners, without vindicating his own injured perfections, by executing deserved punishment, either upon finners themselves, or upon a surety in their stead.

He hath declared, that he *will by no means clear the guilty*. This is not a mere arbitrary determination, flowing from his sovereign will, but a necessary one, flowing from his nature. He would not act consistently with himself, should he pass over the offence he hath got, without a full satisfaction. How should either angels or men know that God is essentially and infinitely holy, if he should deal with sin as a trifle, and with finners as if they were not transgressors? He will have all to *be still, and know that he is God*, and that he will be exalted by the manifestation of his holiness in the punishment of sin. Men acknowledge it to be a principle founded in

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justice, that a criminal should suffer according to the nature and extent of his crime. That principle in the law, which God hath given in his word, must meet with the reason and justice of every man, viz. that *he that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*. Now upon this very principle it must appear, that sin exposes the sinner to eternal death. It is a murderous evil. By it men have destroyed themselves, and, as far as it can go, it is a direct thrust at God himself. Can any thing less, then, than the punishment which God hath threatened, be attached unto it? And could God be just, should he pardon the sinner, without seeing that punishment duly inflicted, either on himself, or on a representative in his room? Surely not. The necessity of a satisfaction for sin appears, with most convincing evidence, in the gift of God's eternal Son,—in his giving him to be a burnt-offering. For if this could have been omitted, and sinners of mankind saved, consistently with the nature and perfections of God, then, surely, our Lord Jesus Christ would not have died as an atoning sacrifice. If God spared Abraham's Isaac, when the deadly knife was about to be plunged into his heart, would he not much more have spared *his own only begotten and beloved Son*, if it had been possible? But, says the apostle, *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, Rom. viii. 32.

3. This Lamb, being provided for a burnt-offering, imports, that mere creature-sacrifices could give no satisfaction to God. These began to be offered, it would appear, at a very early period of the world. It has been thought, and that with a great degree of plausibility, that the beasts, with the skins of which

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our first parents were clothed, were offered up in sacrifice. If this was the case, then the very first instance of death, among the brutal creation, was the death of a sacrifice, typifying the great atoning sacrifice to be offered up *in the end of the ages*. Thus early did they begin, and they continued, from time to time, through a course of more than four thousand years. They were necessary by divine authority, as types of Christ's sacrifice, through which Old Testament believers might look to him. But though multitudes of burnt-offerings and sacrifices were consumed on God's altars, both before and after the flood, yet they were absolutely incapable of making any real atonement of sin, or giving any satisfaction to a just and holy God. In this respect, he had no pleasure in them. Psal. xl. 6. compared with Heb. x. 5, 6. *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.* It is absurd in the extreme to suppose, that an infinitely glorious Being could find his holiness and justice vindicated and glorified by the death of dumb animals. He could neither *require* them, nor *accept* of them, as capable of making any proper atonement. In this respect he said, *I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds: Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Psal. l. 9. 13. And the Apostle tells us in Heb. x. 4. that *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.*

These sacrifices were not equal in dignity, even to the nature of sinning man, and, therefore, they were infinitely beneath God, who was offended, and absolutely unworthy of his notice and regard. They were but perishing brutes, and their blood could be

of no use, farther than as an instituted type of *his*, who was to come. They could neither give satisfaction to God for sin, nor could they be a ground of peace to the consciences of the offerers. To this purpose an apostle says, Heb. ix. 9. that *the first tabernacle—was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.* It was impossible, that a man, whose conscience was duly wounded with a sense of sin, could attain to peace, or think that he had done enough, or that, indeed, he had done any thing to make satisfaction for his offences, when he had offered a beast at God's altar. His pardon and peace must have been secured upon quite another ground,—even upon the footing of *his blood, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, and which blood, only, can purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God,* Heb. ix. 14.

4. This Lamb being provided for a burnt-offering, imports, the actual substitution of Christ into the law-room and stead of sinners. We see an emblem of this in the substitution of *the ram* into the place of *Isaac*, ver. 13. *Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering, in the stead of his son.* Consider a guilty elect world in a state similar to that of Isaac, when he was bound, and laid on the altar upon the wood, and his father's hand lifted up to bring down death with the very first stroke. They, like others, were condemned, and ready to perish. The arm of Justice was lifted up to slay them, with a complete and with a perpetual slaughter.

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ter. But a gracious God said, "*Lay not thine hand upon them, neither do any thing unto them; behold, I have provided a Lamb; let him be taken, and offered for a burnt-offering, in the stead of them.*" Though God lay under no necessity to admit of a substitute in the place of sinners, yet he was pleased to do so. He foresaw, that men would become guilty before him, and he not only *consented* but *decreed*, that satisfaction should be made by a surety in their room. Such a dispensation is to be attributed to his sovereign good pleasure. The law made no provision of a surety or satisfaction, in case man should become a sinner; but neither did it refuse to admit of one, if one could be found. This is owing to the mere free will and pleasure of the great Lawgiver, who might have, peremptorily, demanded satisfaction from sinners themselves, or, otherwise, have consigned them to endless ruin.

It is unspeakable matter of praise, that there was a translation of the guilt of the offenders unto one in their room. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all*, Isa. liii. 6. And, of consequence, the punishment due to our sins must fall upon him also. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin.* The Scriptures are full of the most plain and pointed testimonies to the truth of his substitution into the place of guilty men. *He died for our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He gave himself for us,—instead of us. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree. Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.* God thus saw that it

was *expedient*, that one should die for the people, rather than that all should perish, John xi. 49.—52.

5. This Lamb, being provided for a burnt-offering, imports, that it behoved Christ to suffer and die as a sacrifice for sin. For this end he was substituted into the room of sinful men, and for this end he became incarnate. The beasts which were used in the burnt-offerings, were slain and consumed by fire upon the altar. They were *sacrifices made by fire unto the Lord*. And we read, particularly, that the pass-over lamb was killed, and *roasted with fire*. We would consider this as typifying the exquisite sufferings of Jesus Christ in the stead of his people. We know that some view *the fire*, with which the typical offerings were roasted and consumed, as referring to Christ's love to sinners, which was displayed in his sufferings and death, and which was *strong as death*, which *many waters could not quench, neither could the floods drown it, the coals whereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame*. No doubt, free and sovereign love was the source from whence his substitution into the room of the guilty did proceed, and his love to them carried him through all his sufferings. It was because *God so freely, so wonderfully, so inconceivably loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*; and *hereby perceive we the love of God the Son, because he laid down his life for us*, John iii. 16. 1 John iii. 16.

But, we rather think, that the burnt-offerings were intended to typify the exquisite and tremendous nature of Christ's sufferings and death. The fire had a destructive and consuming efficacy upon them. By it their very substance was exhausted, and they were reduced to ashes. This may well be considered as

an emblem of the wrath of God, which the divine Surety had to endure, in the room and stead of his people. This, like a fire within him, *turned his moisture into the drougt of summer.* And hence we find him complaining, Psal. xxii. 14, 15. *My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me to the dust of death.* The wrath of God is compared to devouring fire, and everlasting burnings. The very fire that burns in hell,—that *breath* of an offended JEHOVAH, which, *like a stream of brimstone*, kindles the infernal *Tophet*, and keeps it burning,—flamed against the Surety. Though he was the holy *Lamb of God*, spotless, harmless, and innocent, in himself, yet, when found in the room of sinners, he must be made a burnt-offering. The sword of inexorable and vindictive justice got an order to *awake against the Shepherd*, and to *smite that man*, who is the fellow of the *LORD of hosts.* He spared not his own Son. He put into his hand a cup of unmixed wrath, filled up to the brim, and laid him under the most indispensable necessity to drink, John xviii. 11.

6. We only observe further on this head, that the design of this Lamb's being provided for a burnt-offering, was to procure peace with a holy and just God for sinners. The design of offering sacrifice is to appease an offended God, and avert his wrath. The nature of the thing supposes this. Why should an attempt be made to give satisfaction to one who is displeased, but with a view of turning away his anger, and procuring his favour? This was the great end designed to be accomplished by the death of Jesus, which we are this day to *shew forth* at his table.

And

And we have the highest encouragement to do so, because this end is actually and fully gained. He hath *made peace by the blood of his cross*.

God and man were in a state of perfect peace, before that *evil and bitter thing* sin took place in the world. But no sooner did it enter, than the peace was broken. Man, by his sin, declared himself an enemy to God, and, in the threatenings of the broken law, God declared himself an enemy to the sinner. But the Lord Jesus Christ, according to God's abundant mercy, was constituted a Mediator between them, that, by offering a proper sacrifice, to make an atonement for sin, he might procure peace from an offended Sovereign toward his rebellious subjects. As we have materially said before, this could not be obtained, in the way of God's dispensing, either with the precept or the penalty, of his own holy law. But, if such an invaluable blessing as peace with God is, might be had, it could only be through a perfect fulfilment of obedience to the law's precept, and a full execution of its penalty. Christ did the one, and endured the other. He *magnified the law, and made it honourable*. He endured the execution of its dreadful curse upon himself. Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*. In this way peace was made, and is secured for guilty rebels. Every stroke that he received, every pain that he endured, and every drop of his blood that was shed, had a voice speaking peace to sinners. *The blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel*. So that your peace with God, believer, is through his becoming a burnt-offering, to pacify your offended Sovereign and Judge. *Being justified by faith, you have*
peace

was provided for a Burnt-offering. 237

peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. That God, whose indignation you had every reason to dread, is to you *the God of peace*, and may well be the object of your holy joy. *Being justified by his blood, you shall be saved from wrath through him. — And not only so, but you also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom you have now received the atonement, Rom. v. 1. 9. 11. —* We proceed,

III. To speak of the Lord's providing this Lamb for a burnt-offering.

1. That God alone, and no other, could make this provision. Such a method of delivering sinners from guilt and condemnation, and bringing them into a state of reconciliation with God, could originate, and be formed in the Divine Mind only. Accordingly, God challenges it as his own contrivance. Prov. viii. 12. *I Wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.* As we have said, it belonged to God, to admit of a substitute, and to accept of satisfaction from another than sinners themselves. And, consequently, if he was pleased to admit of another to act for them, that substitute must be one of his own choosing. For, if mankind could not have known that God would or could allow one to represent them at his bar, unless he had been graciously pleased to tell them that, much less could they have been able to find one, whom God would sustain, or who was qualified for such an undertaking. This, therefore, was God's own prerogative. I, says he, *have found a ransom*; and, upon the ground of it, *he is gracious, and saith, Deliver them from going down to the pit.* The whole mystery and method of our reconciliation to God is of himself.

2 Cor.

2 Cor. v. 18. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.*

2. That God hath provided this Lamb in matchless wisdom. This attribute is displayed in all his works. If we look around us, and behold the works of his hands in this lower world, we must be obliged to say with the Psalmist, *O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all*, Psal. civ. 24. But in the providing of his own eternal Son to expiate the sins of an elect world by the sacrifice of himself, we see a display of *the manifold wisdom of God*. That he is *the only wise God*, is proclaimed by every part of the mystery of redemption, but especially in the election and appointment of his *only begotten Son* to the Mediatorial office. Could a created understanding have conceived it possible, that this glorious Person should assume the real nature of man, and, in that nature, become a burnt-offering in man's stead? No; if God had not declared it to be both possible and certain, such a thought could never have entered into the heart of man or angel.—His wisdom is manifested in ordering the sufferings and death of Christ to his own glory. This is contrary to what corrupt shallow reason would imagine. That God's Son should be humbled in human nature,—that he should bleed and die as a victim in the room of sinners,—would seem rather to be dishonourable and reproachful to God, than glorifying to him. Only imagine what the carnal idolatrous world would have said, if Abraham had been permitted to slay his son. Would they not have reckoned him an unnatural and cruel father, and have reproached both him, and his God? Yet here we see JEHOVAH giving *his own Son*,—the
Son

Son of himself,—to be a burnt-offering, and, by this affording a more illustrious display of all his glorious perfections, than is given by all his other works. Hence said Jesus himself, when about to perform the last act of his meritorious mediation, in laying down his life, *Father, I have glorified thee upon the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,* John xvii. 4.

3. That God's providing this Lamb was wholly of his own grace. His love to perishing men is the original fountain of this wonderful dispensation. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,* 1 John iv. 10. He could have no motive without himself, to excite him to manifest such amazing good-will towards men. The natural condition of all the sons of Adam is the same. There is nothing more amiable or worthy about those, in whose behalf Christ mediated, than about others who perish. It is an error that strikes directly against the freedom and sovereignty of new covenant love, to allege, that God purposed the salvation of some of mankind, and appointed his Son to be a sacrifice in their stead, because he foresaw that they would not be so bad as others, but would distinguish themselves by their faith and holiness. Such an opinion is ever-false of the scripture-doctrine about the universal corruption and misery of mankind, and about the way of recovery from it by the new covenant. For if these, in whose behalf Christ suffered and died, were more disposed and able to do good than others, and if this moved God to take an effectual method to save them, then whence is it, that the Scriptures uniformly represent the natural state of all men to be

be a state of spiritual impotency, wickedness, and death, and the way of recovery from that state to be wholly owing to mere free and sovereign mercy? But *let God be true, and every man a liar*, who will be so bold as to contradict him. The Spirit of God represents the people, who obtain favour and peace with God through the obedience and death of Christ, to be, in their natural state, equally involved under guilt, and under the power of sin and the devil, and, therefore, equally deserving everlasting punishment, as others. The *laying of their help upon one who is mighty*, was wholly of the grace of God. And their salvation, from first to last, is altogether of him, who is, therefore, emphatically called *the God of all grace*, 1 Pet. v. 10.

4. That God provided this Lamb for his own glory. Abraham doth not say, *God will provide us a lamb*; but he saith, *God will provide HIMSELF a Lamb*. Though our redemption and salvation was a special end of Christ's substitution into the room of sinners, yet the glory of a Three-one God was the principal end thereof. God had determined, of his own free love, to save a number of the human race from the miseries of their fallen estate. But such a gracious purpose could not be put into actual execution, in a consistency with the honour of his holiness and justice, unless an adequate satisfaction be made for their transgressions. Here, then, is a work which God hath determined to accomplish. He hath firmly resolved to manifest his glory, in bringing back a number of banished sinners to the enjoyment of his favour, and to exalt the children of wrath to a state of eternal felicity. But there is an insurmountable bar in the way. Justice insists, that

an atonement be made for their sin, for *he will by no means clear the guilty*. The sinners themselves can make no such atonement. In vain would angels propose to be sacrificed for them. They could no more take away sin, than *the blood of goats and calves*. What then? Shall God's glorious design be frustrated? Shall the work of mercy to us, and glory to himself, be impeded? Shall God's purpose to make his glory great in our salvation be laid aside, for want of a *propitiation for sin*? No; it is impossible. *God will provide,—God hath provided HIMSELF a Lamb for a burnt-offering*. Jesus Christ is called *the Lamb of God*, not only, because he was chosen and appointed by him to his mediatory work, but because the supreme end of that work was to glorify all the perfections of God. Hence the Father addressed the Mediator in these words, *Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified*, Isa. xlix. 3.

5. That God provided this Lamb from eternity. Christ's becoming a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people, is the fruit of an eternal purpose. Hence he is called *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8. And, saith the Apostle Peter, *Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who, verily, was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world*, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, 20. The provision of a Saviour for sinners was made in the divine council, before they had any actual existence. God, whose understanding is infinite, foresaw the ruined state into which all mankind would be brought by the breach of the covenant of works. He was pleased to permit this to take place, but, blessed be

his glorious name ! he was also pleased to forbid that all should perish for ever in that state. *He made a covenant with his chosen One*,—his own eternal Son,—and *set him up from everlasting*, to be a Surety in the room of sinful men. He consecrated him to be a Priest, to *finish transgression*, to *make an end of sin*, and to *make reconciliation for iniquity*, by the great *sacrifice of himself*. So that although he did not actually appear till the end of the ages, yet he was chosen and appointed to be a burnt-offering from everlasting. And hence that rich *grace*, which reigns in the whole of our salvation, is said to be *given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*, 2 Tim. i. 9.

6. That God was making this provision for sinners in all the revelation of Christ which was given, previous to his being manifested in the flesh. As he was set apart from eternity to be the Saviour of the world, by becoming a sacrifice and propitiation for sin, it was necessary that a revelation of him should be made, so soon as sin entered into the world. And, accordingly, he was early made known, as one who was to be a sufferer, in having *his heel bruised*, Gen. iii. 15. *God, at sundry times, and in diverse manners, spake about Christ in time past unto the fathers*. He spake by various promises, prophecies, and types. By all these, he was revealing the only method of pardon and acceptance with himself, through *the Redeemer*, who should come to *Zion*. He thus exhibited *the Lamb*, which he had *provided for a burnt-offering*, unto the church in past ages. He presented to sinners the sacrifice of Christ, and required them to improve it, as the ground of their faith and hope of salvation. Every sacrifice, that was offered agreeable to his will, pointed them

to the *one offering* of Jesus. However different the mode, in which he spake to them, was from the plain and clear manner, in which he speaks to us, yet the substance of both is the same. He was *then*, as *now*, *setting forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.* The Lamb of God was as really *provided* for sinners who lived before Christ's time, as for those who have lived since. The gospel was *preached unto them as well as unto us*, and the substance of it was just this, *That God had provided a Lamb for a burnt-offering.*

7. That God made this provision in the actual incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before he could be qualified for making an end of sin by the sacrifice of himself, he must of necessity have the human nature united with his divine person. Without this, he could not have been humbled, nor could he have obeyed and died in the room of men. His incarnation was, therefore, necessary in order to his offering himself without spot unto God. He must be *made like unto his brethren*, especially in having their nature, *that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest*, Heb. ii. 17. Accordingly, God, who called him in righteousness from eternity, also furnished him with a human nature, *in the fulness of the time*, and *sent him forth, made of a woman.* Hence he is said to *bring his first-begotten into the world*, Heb. i. 6. To the same purpose, Christ is represented as *saying, when he cometh into the world, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me*, Heb. x. 5. All the typical sacrifices were unsatisfactory, and absolutely insufficient to atone for sin, and pacify an incensed God; but *a body*, says Christ, *hast thou prepared me*; as if he had said,

“ Since these ceremonial offerings have been provided, from the experience of many ages, to be totally insufficient for taking away sin, thou *hast prepared a body*,—thou hast provided a human nature,—*for me*, in which I may be a burnt-offering, for making real and proper atonement.”

8. In fine, God is still providing this Lamb in the gospel and gospel-ordinances. We need not say, as Isaac did, *Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* We may rather, like Abraham, in ver. 14. *call the name of this place, JEHOVAH-fireb*, The Lord will provide: and we may say to this day, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*. Did Abraham, on a mountain in the land of Moriah, see the care and goodness of God, in providing *the ram caught in a thicket*, for a sacrifice in the stead of Isaac? We, on the mount Zion, have access to behold a more glorious display of his infinite love and goodness, in *not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all*. The Lamb, which God provided to be a burnt-offering for us, is set before us in word and sacrament; and the Lord is addressing us all in the words of John, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*

A few inferences shall conclude this discourse.

1. We may learn, that as God is merciful, he is also just. He was inclined and determined to extend unmerited mercy to a number of the human race. But this could not be done, unless the punishment due on account of sin be fully executed. The necessary language of justice is, *Without shedding of blood is no remission*. God's covenant of grace, was a covenant by sacrifice. When it was purposed

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to shew mercy unto sinners, it was no less firmly secured, that justice should take place in the punishment of sin upon a Surety in their room. Christ must be a propitiation,—to declare God's righteousness,—that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26.

2. Learn, that all the people of God, as well as others, were, by nature, in a vastly deplorable and dangerous state. They were equally guilty with the rest of mankind, and, therefore, *the children of wrath, even as others*. Isaac was not in such danger, when the deadly knife was ready to be plunged into his heart. Had you been standing near, and beholding that strange sight, would you not have reckoned him as good as dead? But our natural condition is, in all respects, infinitely more dreadful and dangerous. Isaac was an inoffensive, and, very probably, a godly youth, even at this early period of his life. He had deserved no such death at the hand of his own father. There might, therefore, be some reason to hope, that Providence would interpose, and free him from his destruction. But we are guilty of the most daring rebellion against God. We are *enemies to him in our minds by wicked works*. *The carnal mind is, not only inimical, but enmity against God*. How often have we insulted him by our wicked thoughts, words, and actions? He hath, consequently, *revealed his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. We are laid under his curse, and exposed unto the dreadful effects of his indignation. The sword of vindictive justice is lifted high, ready to be brought down with a most effectual and deadly stroke. *Who knows the power of God's anger? according to his fear, so is his wrath*.

We are neither able to resist him, nor to shun him, nor to appease him. Such is the deplorable estate which all were in, when the Lord mercifully interposed, and said, *Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.*

3. Learn, that the deliverance of men from a state of sin and wrath is wholly of God, to the praise of the glory of his grace. JEHOVAH *provided a Lamb for a burnt-offering*, and that Lamb was no other than his own incarnate Son, *who gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour*, Eph. v. 2. As our salvation is from the free love of God, as the rich fountain of it, so it is on account of the obedience and death of God in our nature, as the meritorious ground of it. By this method of salvation, all boasting and gloriation in ourselves is for ever excluded. Read Rom. iii. 24,—27.

4. Hence see, how you are to approach unto God, so as to have acceptance before him, and communion with him, in his ordinances to-day. It is a serious question, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?* How shall I, who am a guilty, and a justly condemned sinner by nature, draw near to an infinitely holy and just God,—a God whom I have so often offended, and, therefore, have incurred his highest displeasure? The Psalmist directs you, in answer to such an inquiry, Psal. xcvi. 8. *Bring an offering, and come into his courts.* But you may still ask, *What offering shall I bring?* Would *the Lord be pleased with ten thousands of rams, or thousands of rivers of oil*, if I had such things to give? No; these are not the offerings which God hath provided, or with which

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he can be pleased. But he hath *provided for himself a burnt-offering*. Jesus Christ, *our passover*, was *sacrificed for us*, and *with this sacrifice God is well pleased*. This he presents to you in the gospel, and warrants you to receive and rest upon it by faith, as the ground of your peace and acceptance with him. This offering you must bring to him, in all your dealings with him, saying, *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed*.

Let every gospel-hearer study to be concerned about his sin, as a crime committed against God,—a crime which, if not atoned for, must be punished with the most tremendous severity. *Who knoweth the power of God's wrath? On account of sin, a fire is kindled in his anger, which shall burn unto the lowest hell.*—Consider that you can make no atonement to God for your offences against him. None of your services and sufferings can give the least satisfaction for sin. Though you were burnt to ashes, yet these ashes would continue under the curse.—Be thankful, that *God hath provided a burnt-offering*. *The Lamb of God was slain* in the room and stead of guilty men. *He died for the ungodly*. His death, which is shewed forth in the Sacrament of the Supper, was the death of a sacrifice. And, considering the infinite dignity of his person, the sacrifice was of infinite worth and value.—Here is ground for every guilty sinner to rest upon. Here you will meet with a reconciled God, whose anger is turned away; and here you will find solid peace with your own consciences.—Let none despair of salvation from sin and wrath, seeing *God hath provided such a Lamb for a burnt-offering*. The greatest sinner shall find mercy, in turning his eyes to our great New Testament

ment High Priest and Sacrifice. Though his guilt had as loud a cry for vengeance as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet by faith in this atoning sacrifice, it shall be pardoned, and God will say to his soul, *I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done.*

Let the Lord's people *joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have now received the atonement.* Bless the Lord; that *the worthy Lamb* was made *a burnt-offering*, that you might escape the vengeance which your sins deserved. Did JEHOVAH's wrathful hand lie so heavy upon the Surety, as to press him down *to the dust of death*, then he will never lay a vindictive hand upon you, nor do any evil thing unto you.—Trust in your reconciled God and Father, for providing for you all that pertains to life and godliness. Did he *not spare* even *his own Son*, but *delivered him up for you all*, how shall he not with him also *freely give you all things?*—Trust in him for all necessary grace to fit you for the solemn service of *shewing forth the Lord's death till he come.* You may find much awanting on your part. Let all your wants lie upon him. His name and his memorial still is, *JEHOVAH-Jireh, the Lord will provide.*

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S E R M O N X.

THE ABUSERS OF RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES ARE
IN DANGER OF A FEARFUL DOOM *.

MATTH. xi. 23.

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.——

IT is a precious privilege to enjoy the gospel of Christ. It discovers an infallible method of obtaining deliverance from impending ruin, and the possession of eternal happiness. It opens up a way in which these, who are naturally upon the brink of the pit, may reach eternal glory. Every person, therefore, who values his soul, who has been convinced of his natural misery, and who has any proper desires after happiness, must prize the gospel, as a joyful sound. It is to be lamented, however, that it hath had, and still has had entertainment from many. They despise *the things which belong to their peace*, and though, by means of the gospel, they are brought to the very gate of heaven, and have it cast open before them, yet they refuse to enter in. They prefer *death to life*, and *the curse to the blessing*. And, if mercy prevent not, they shall have their

* This Sermon was preached on a Humiliation-day.

their choice. For, the mere enjoyment of Christian privileges is so far from insuring salvation, that, if these privileges are misimproved, they are forerunners of uncommon ruin, according to this text.

In the preceding part of this chapter, after some discourse that Christ had about John the baptist, we find him characterising that generation, to which he and his servant John preached the gospel. In verse 16th, he describes them in a singular manner, as a very foolish and wicked set of men. *Whereunto shall I liken this generation?* Though he could have no difficulty in finding a just similitude to which he might compare them, yet he speaks as one at a loss. It intimates their uncommon folly, unbelief, and impenitence. No generation ever enjoyed greater privileges, for no preachers were greater than Christ and John the baptist, whom they had among them. Notwithstanding of this, no generation was ever more gospel-proof. He compares them to children, trifling and diverting themselves in the market place, and saying to one another, *We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.* The parable may teach us the various methods which God useth to bring sinners to thoughtfulness about sin and salvation. He *pipeth* to them,—he speaks pleasantly and comfortably to them, in the gracious proclamations and promises of the gospel. But they have no delight in these. They are not attracted by them, nor concerned about them. He *mourns* unto them, in all that is said about the evil and danger of sin, in the precepts and threatenings of his word. But they continue to love sin, and to practise it. *They hold fast deceit, and refuse to return.* Thus the character

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of that generation was made up of unbelief and impenitence. And it is, by no means, difficult to perceive a great coincidence between their character and that of the generation to which we belong.

In the context, we find Christ upbraiding and rebuking some particular cities for their great guilt, in rejecting him, and pronouncing a very awful doom which they had brought upon themselves. The cities here mentioned are *Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*. They were upon the borders of the sea of Galilee, and were much frequented by Christ, during the time of his public ministry. They had access to hear many a precious sermon, and to see many a glorious miracle. It is said, in ver. 20. that *most of his mighty works were done in these cities*. Yet all these proved to be in vain, as to the greater part of their inhabitants. They continued to despise and reject Christ, refused to believe his report about himself, as the anointed Saviour who should come into the world, and so counted themselves unworthy of eternal life.—Their sin was aggravated from the exercise of God's sovereignty in conferring privileges upon them, which he had denied to others. Hence our Lord said to them, *If the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes*. These words do not mean, that any of mankind are more naturally disposed to repent, and believe the gospel, or to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, than others. *The carnal mind in all is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. Nor do they mean, that the Redeemer's grace was insufficient or unable to bring the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida to believe
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on him. For he has an *arm that is full of power*, and he is *able to subdue even all things unto himself*. But the words of our Lord intimate, that persons, who are not prejudiced against the gospel, are more ordinarily and readily wrought upon by it, when they are favoured with the enjoyment of it, than those who have imbibed prejudices against it, or who have been for a time hardened under it. The inhabitants of these cities, being Jews, were prejudiced against Christ, and therefore rejected his testimony; whereas the people of Tyre and Sidon, not having enjoyed Christ's ministry, had no such prejudice against him. It is a common case, for a people, who have enjoyed gracious privileges, and who have continued spiritually barren and unfruitful under them, to be more backward to be convinced of sin and excited to duty, than these who never enjoyed so many warnings. Jeremiah, and other prophets, continued for a long time to press the Jews to repentance, with small effect; but Jonah had not long warned the blind Ninevites of their threatened overthrow, before they were all *clad in sackcloth*. Thus our Lord argues against these cities; *Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes*.

In verse 22d he pronounces their aggravated doom. *But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you*. The inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would, no doubt, perish in their iniquities, but the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida were greater sinners than they. These last *knew their Lord's will, and did it not*, and, therefore,

fore, they should *be beaten with many stripes*: where as the former would not have the guilt of despising the gospel, and of rejecting the Redeemer, chargeable upon them.

In the words of our text we have an awful sentence pronounced against Capernaum. *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted into heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.* This was a place where Christ ordinarily dwelt. We read in Matth. iv. 13. that *leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtalim.* And, coming there, the gospel of salvation came there. Being *the Sun of righteousness*, he diffused light in that place, which had been in great darkness. His heavenly doctrine dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew. He not only spake to their ears, but he performed such miracles in their sight, as proved him to be divine. Thus was Capernaum singularly favoured, in comparison of many other parts of the world. She was *lifted up to heaven*, in enjoying the presence and ministry of the Lord of heaven and earth. She had the way to heaven laid open before her, and so had an advantage that Sodom and Gomorrah never enjoyed. —But, you may observe her doom foretold, on account of abusing her privileges. *Thou shalt be brought down to hell.* Capernaum refused Christ's counsel, and would have none of his reproof. She persisted in unbelief and impenitence, in defiance of all that he said and did, and, therefore, *her judgment lingered not, and her damnation slumbered not.* Those very lips, which formerly preached peace to this city, now proclaim the ruin thereof. It would, by no means, screen these sinners from destruction, that

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they had the Saviour among them, seeing they refused to improve him in that character. The Redeemer, whom unbelievers still continue to despise, pronounces the same doom against them. *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted into heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.*

These words teach us, *That certain destruction awaits those who misimprove the precious privilege of a gospel-dispensation.* The text is not to be viewed as referring to Capernaum only. This city is rather to be considered as an awful beacon set up to warn every other city and town, and every people and person, in all succeeding ages, against the sin of despising the gospel, and rejecting the Saviour, who is exhibited by it. All who enjoy the gospel in its purity are, like Capernaum, *exalted unto heaven.* And, if they are found despising and misimproving that light, the threatening here points as directly against them, as it did against this city. *Thou shalt be brought down to hell.*—In discoursing upon this subject, we may,

- I. Speak of that privilege enjoyed by a people, in respect of which, they are said to be *exalted unto heaven*;
- II. Show how they may be said to be *exalted unto heaven*, by enjoying that privilege;
- III. Consider the import of the threatening against these who misimprove or abuse that privilege; and then add a few inferences for improvement.—We are,

I. To speak of that privilege enjoyed by a people, in respect of which, they are said to be *exalted unto heaven*,

heaven. There is no church or people presently upon the earth, who enjoy precisely the same privilege that Capernaum did, in having the Redeemer's bodily presence among them. It is long since *he ascended up on high, and the heavens must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things.* Yet still a people, who enjoy the gospel-dispensation, are considered, in God's view, as *exalted unto heaven.* And this privilege includes in it these things following.

1. It includes the enjoyment of the written word. Persons who have Bibles are exalted unto heaven. Hence it is represented as the distinguishing privilege of Israel, that they had a divine revelation, which was, in the sovereignty of God, withheld from other nations. Psal. cxlviii. 19. *He shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation: And as for his judgments they have not known them.* The Scriptures of truth were completed, and all that God designed them to contain was embodied in them, not many years after our Lord's ascension. They were intended and appointed by their glorious Author, to supply the place of these extraordinary revelations, which, from time to time, were made by prophets and apostles. We are not now to expect any new revelation of the mind and will of God. The Scriptures of truth contain all those doctrines and duties which are connected with salvation. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* And saith the apostle concerning Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 15. *From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able*

to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Must not a person or people who enjoy these be *exalted unto heaven*, seeing that heaven itself is contained in them. They point out the way to it, and they hold it forth and secure it, in the great and precious promises, which are contained in them. John v. 39. *Search the Scriptures*, said Jesus, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.*

Now the Bible is an article, that hath been long, and still is, in great plenty among us. This is such a vast mercy, that we cannot be sufficiently thankful for it. In many parts of the world, it is not known that there is such a book; and, even in some nations of Europe, the people durst not be known to look upon it in their own language, otherwise the severest penalties have been inflicted. It has, however, been our privilege, for a long time, to enjoy with freedom that fountain of divine light and truth, and directory in the way of salvation. And the Lord, in the course of his providence, has opened a way for mens having it at such an easy rate, that he must be a poor person indeed, who has not a Bible.—By possessing it, you are *exalted unto heaven*. By it Christ comes into your families, and into your closets. In it he instructs you in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. These things, which have been *hid*, even in point of external revelation, from many *wise and prudent* men of the world, are *revealed* unto you. He is speaking over to you the substance of what he said by his Spirit in the prophets to the Old Testament church, and what he said in his own person, and by his apostles, in the beginning of the New Testament dispensation: for what was *written aforetime* was

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written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. He is addressing himself to your consciences, in all the warnings, reproofs, and threatenings, contained in his word. He is demanding the consent of your hearts to all the calls, invitations, and offers, which he makes therein. He is commending himself to your love and esteem, in all the account that is given of the glory of his person, and of the suitableness and sufficiency of his character, as a Saviour. He is telling you that he is the only way to heaven, and that every person, who comes to God through him, shall be graciously accepted, John xiv. 6. and vi. 37. So that, in having the Bible, you are *exalted unto heaven*, as to privilege; and, although you had no other mean of grace, that of itself, if misimproved, will leave you altogether inexcusable.

2. The privilege, in respect of which a people are said to be *exalted unto heaven*, includes in it the enjoyment of a pure and faithful gospel-ministry. This the inhabitants of Capernaum were favoured with, in having the great *Apostle of our profession* residing among them. He was not idle, but employed in preaching righteousness in their congregations. Matth. iv. 13, 17. *Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum;— and from that time he began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Next to the enjoyment of the written word, that of having a pure and honest gospel-ministry, is a blessing of the first magnitude. The Scriptures, though they are a perfect rule of faith and manners, were never designed to exclude or supersede the necessity of preaching the gospel. It is necessary that there should be some in the church in every age, whose office it is to explain,

plain, open up, and enforce the doctrines and duties laid down in the word of truth. For this end, the King and Head of the Church hath appointed the office of the ministry to continue in all generations. The public *teaching of the nations* shall be maintained *to the end of the world*, because Christ is *with* the teachers. He hath expressly declared, that the preaching of the gospel is as necessary, in its own place, for carrying on the work of grace, as the written word is, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. Eph. iv. 11, 12.

No land, that we know of, has been more eminently favoured with this privilege than our native land. Amidst all attempts to corrupt and expunge the pure gospel of Christ, there have always been some faithful ministers, who both knew and valued it, and set themselves for the defence of it. In the midst of prevailing ignorance, error, and spiritual tyranny, they have been honoured to be steadfast in maintaining the doctrines of free grace, zealous for the prerogatives of Christ, and watchful over the rights of his people. By their means, the knowledge of the truth has been transmitted from generation to generation. Thus we, in the present age, enjoy the preaching of the gospel in its purity. This privilege *exalts* a people *to heaven*, not only in comparison of these benighted nations, who are without divine revelation, but also in comparison of others, who enjoy little more than the name of a ministry, and the name of the gospel. In how many places are the most damnable heresies taught under that name? There is to be found *a gospel*, that exhibits *a Christ*, who is only an *exalted creature*, and not *the true God*. There is *a gospel*, that denies a real and proper atonement for sin. There is *a gospel*, that denies

nies a free justification through imputed righteousness. These, and other wretched errors, are often taught, under the name of the gospel of Christ, although the Scriptures assure us, that they belong to *another gospel*. How can persons, who sit under such a ministry, and imbibe such principles, know any thing of the true mystery of salvation through a divine, incarnate, and atoning Redeemer?

Highly favoured, in comparison of these, is that people, whose ministers make conscience of delivering the doctrines of the gospel, as they are purely and plainly taught in the word of the living God. They have matters of faith and practice taught and enjoined upon them from the divine *law and testimony*, according to which word, if men speak not, *there is no light in them*. Is it not a privilege, to be under the care of such spiritual fathers, as administer wholesome food to their children, in comparison of being under those, who are so unnatural and cruel, as to give *a stone* instead of *bread*, *a scorpion* instead of *an egg*, *a serpent* instead of *a fish*, or poison instead of medicine?—Add to this, that a people, who are under a pure gospel-ministry, are in the ordinary way of salvation. It is the preaching of *the truth as it is in Jesus* only, that can be expected to be the means of his dealing with souls. For this end he comes along with his servants whom he employs in his work, and the people have him speaking by them, whether they hear him in the exercise of faith, or not, Luke x. 16. *He that beareth you, beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me*. So that those who enjoy a pure and faithful gospel-ministry may, with great propriety, be said to be *exalted unto heaven*.

3. This privilege includes in it the enjoyment of the seals of the New Covenant in their purity. The Lord hath not only appointed the covenant of grace to be exhibited doctrinally in the preaching of the word, but he hath also appointed seals to that covenant. These he hath instituted to be standing ordinances in the church, and to be dispensed unto those, who give charitable evidence of their having taken hold of his covenant. He hath commanded his servants to *baptize*, as well as to *teach all nations*, and hath promised his presence in doing so *unto the end of the world*. The Sacrament of our Lord's Supper is an ordinance *received of the Lord*, and is expressly appointed to be maintained in the church, in commemoration of his death, *till he come*. A people, enjoying a regular dispensation of these ordinances, in their scriptural purity, is highly favoured,—even *exalted unto heaven*.

When we speak of dispensing these ordinances in purity, we mean, their being dispensed, according to Christ's appointment, without any of the inventions of men, and, also, their being dispensed to persons who have, at least, the external scriptural marks of the Lord's people. He must be very unacquainted with the history of the church, who doth not know that many have dared to add a number of their own inventions to God's ordinances. In many churches they are dispensed with a variety of superstitious and idolatrous ceremonies. Men, in endeavouring to refine and adorn the ordinances of Christ, have, in a great measure, destroyed them altogether. The simplicity of them has given offence, and, rather than keep them simple and entire, as Christ left them,

them, they have moulded them in human forms, and corrupted them with their own devices.

But, besides the deviation from the scriptural manner of dispensing these ordinances, they have been sadly abused, by being dispensed to persons whose characters betrayed them to be such as have no interest in God's covenant. Nothing is plainer, than that Christ designed these ordinances to be dispensed to persons making a creditable profession of the faith, and having a conversation becoming the gospel. Yet it is lamentably true, that the erroneous and profane, and men of no religion, who laugh at the whole of divine revelation, have been, when certain occasions required, admitted to partake of the sacraments. Is there not gross absurdity, as well as grievous sin in this? To admit a person to the seal of a covenant, who, perhaps, makes sport of all the doctrine about that covenant; and whose principles and practice prove him to be any enemy to God and religion;—it must require more ingenuity than we can or wish to pretend, to prove it free of absurdity. And it must be a grievous sin against Him who hath said, *Give not that which is holy unto dogs; for what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?*

It is, however, a mercy, that the seals of the covenant are yet dispensed with a considerable measure of scriptural purity; while there are still some who make conscience of separating between *the precious and the vile*, and of *putting difference between the clean and the unclean*. This must be a great privilege conferred on that people favoured with it. Persons who partake of these ordinances in the exercise of faith, get all the blessings of the covenant
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of grace sealed over to them. To give instance in the Sacrament of the Supper only, Christ says, concerning the sacramental cup, *This cup is the new testament in my blood.* It is as if he had said, "Take " this cup as a pledge of the confirmation of the " new testament, or covenant of grace, by my blood." In this ordinance, God the Father declares his satisfaction with Christ; and that all worthy partakers shall assuredly be brought to the full enjoyment of all the blessings promised. Christ declares, on his part, that all that he hath purchased with his blood shall be bestowed upon his people; and, as a pledge of this, he puts visible symbols of his body and blood into their hands. The believer, on his part, declares his final divorce from the law as a covenant of works, and his hearty approbation and acceptance of the new covenant. So that, in this ordinance, God and his people come under mutual promises and engagements to one another. Thus, communion is maintained between them. And nothing can be liker heaven than communion with God upon the earth. Is not the people then, who enjoy these ordinances, justly said to be *exalted unto heaven*?

4. This privilege includes in it the enjoyment of the ordinance of scriptural discipline. This is, indeed, an institution despised by many; and, perhaps, little regarded and valued by those who enjoy it. It has, principally, to do with the faults, offences, and corruptions of men; and hence, there is no reason to wonder that it is in disrepute. This will ever be the case in a time when religion is very low. But it is an ordinance of as much importance, in its own place, as the other ordinances of doctrine and worship are. Yea, it is appointed by the glori-

ous King and Head of the Church, to be a guard, as it were, to the other ordinances of his institution. Only reflect, for a moment, upon the causes of that lamentable corruption and abuse of ordinances which we have taken notice of, and you will find, that the relaxation of the discipline of Christ's house has been one of the chief. Would so many pulpits have been filled with erroneous teachers, if that direction of Christ, by his apostle, had been attended to; *A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject?* Would the Lord's table be planted with loose, profane, and unclean persons, if that command were obeyed; *withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly*; or that, *Put away from among you the wicked person?* Surely not. The discipline of the church is like a hedge planted about a garden, which, when it is broken down, gives admission to thieves and ravenous creatures to enter in and devour it.

It must, therefore, be one of the great privileges of a people to have it maintained, in its due and proper exercise, among them. It is a mean of preventing their minds from being poisoned by the introduction of false teachers. By it their Christian privileges are preserved pure and entire unto them. And when, through weakness and temptation, they fall to the dishonour of God and their profession, and to the offending of fellow Christians, it is an instituted mean for their recovery. They are bound by the authority of the King of Zion to submit, with humility and reverence, to that discipline, which he hath appointed to be exercised towards them. Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule*

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over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.

5. We shall only add, that this privilege, in respect of which a people may be said to be *exalted unto heaven*, includes in it the preservation and peaceable enjoyment of all these ordinances. It is not owing to want of malice in enemies, that we have not been altogether deprived of our Christian privileges long before this time. Hell from beneath has been moved, the kings of the earth and the rulers have taken counsel together, and ungodly men in sacred offices, have, in different ages, joined in a dreadful confederacy to overthrow the scriptural faith of Christians. Our own land has been as remarkable as some others for attempts of this kind. Yet that God, who watcheth over the Bible, and over every ordinance of his own appointment, hath preserved them pure, in defiance of all his enemies. In the present time, we enjoy our religious privileges, not only in purity, but also with peace. In some former periods, the people of God have enjoyed his word and ordinances in purity; but they had to wait upon them in the mountains, their teachers and themselves being, like partridges, hunted by cruel persecutors. Sermons and sacraments were then greatly valued, when persons had to attend them at the hazard of their lives, not knowing but that their worshipping assemblies might be surpris'd and attacked by bands of armed ruffians.

We at present, therefore, have a privilege that many of our godly ancestors did not enjoy. *We sit under our vine and fig-tree*, and have no visible enemy to make us afraid. Surely this is a circumstance that must greatly aggravate our misery, if we be
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found among the final misimprovers of the gospel.—We have observed, that a people,—who enjoy the written word,—who enjoy a pure and faithful gospel-ministry,—who have sealing ordinances dispensed in purity,—who enjoy the ordinance of scriptural discipline,—and who are favoured with external peace in the enjoyment of these,—are, in the language of our text, *exalted unto heaven*.—We proceed,

II. To show how a people may be said to be *exalted unto heaven*, by enjoying such a privilege.

1. These who enjoy the gospel dispensation may be said to be exalted unto heaven, in respect of the free access which they have unto heaven. The design of the gospel is not only to inform mens understandings about some things which they formerly knew not, but also to address them about their real and spiritual concerns. We may sometimes get intelligence of things that we are not interested in. But the gospel not only informs us of what is matter of truth in general, but of what we should consider as matter of truth unto us. Accordingly, it does not only tell us, that heaven is opened to some, but that it is opened to us, and that we have access to enter in by faith. In the gospel Christ says, *I am the door, by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved*. Men, who enjoy this gospel, have Christ offering himself unto them. The great design of it is to proclaim this glorious Saviour. It is a *preaching of Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. It sets him forth as a Prophet, Priest, and King, and, in all these offices, suited unto the case of sinners. He is exhibited as a free gift. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might*

not perish, but have everlasting life. Heaven itself is offered as a free gift. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.

These, who enjoy the gospel truly, have all these doctrines exhibited in their scriptural purity. The offer, which Christ makes of himself, is proclaimed unto them, without requiring any antecedent qualifications on their part to give them a title to it. The offer of the gospel by no means hangs on any conditions to be performed by men. It is particularly addressed to every person without exception. *Men and brethren, unto you is the word of this salvation sent. Whosoever will, let him come, and take the waters of life freely.*—It is thus that a people, enjoying the gospel in purity, may be said to be *exalted unto heaven*, in having the way to it freely set before them.

2. They may be said to be so, when it is considered, that many have actually got into heaven, by means of the same privilege. It is a certain truth, that all the redeemed from among men, who are now surrounding the throne of glory, have been advanced to that happy state, by the instrumentality of the glorious gospel. Their having a place in heaven is not, indeed, owing only to their having lived under divine ordinances; for many have done so, who never came there. But glorified saints were, by the means of grace, brought to saving acquaintance with Christ, and obtained an interest in his salvation. This gospel, which so many despise, and, under the preaching of which, they remain secure and careless, has been the mean of saving all who are already saved. 1 Cor. i. 23. *We preach Christ crucified,*

crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Rom. i. 16. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

Had you opportunity to ask the saints in glory, how they got there? They would all agree in telling you, that, in respect of merit, they were exalted to that state of happiness and dignity in the righteousness of Christ alone. Their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Grace reigning through righteousness brought them to eternal life. But if you were also to inquire, what right they had to that blood, and to that grace, by which they are so highly exalted? They would answer you, that these were set before them in the gospel, as common to all gospel-hearers, as well as unto them, and that they accepted of the offer, and so got to heaven. Now consider, brethren, that the gospel is sent unto you, in the very same manner in which it was sent to them,—offering you all blessedness through Christ. The saints in heaven had no other gospel preached unto them,—no other Christ, no other promises, nor other offers of mercy,—than these which you enjoy. Think seriously, that many have been interested in Christ, in his righteousness, and salvation, and are now singing of these in a triumphant state, by means of these very ordinances which you are now privileged with. And seeing they are already in heaven, by an improvement of these means, you may certainly be said to be exalted unto it, in the enjoyment of them.

3. Those who enjoy the gospel dispensation may be said to be *exalted unto heaven*, because, in respect of this privilege, they are as near heaven as any saint ever was, before he was a saint. You will readily acknowledge, that many saints are in heaven, and that the saints on earth are near it. But you should know, that, in respect of gracious opportunity, you are as near heaven, as any of them were, the moment before regenerating grace made a change upon them. We have nothing to do with the divine purpose. *Secret things belong unto the Lord*. We are only speaking of the common privileges of Christians. And, in this sense, it will remain a truth, that gospel-hearers are as near heaven as any of *the redeemed from among men* were the moment before their union to Christ. What were they previous to this? They were *the children of disobedience and of wrath, even as others*. This the Apostle Paul tells you, and adds, that *at that time they were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 2, 3, 11, 12. What time does the apostle refer to here? The time previous to their conversion surely. So that before divine grace make a change upon men, they are all in the same condition:

Will the finners in Zion, then, believe this truth, that they are as near heaven, in respect of external privileges, as any saint ever was before he submitted to Christ, as *The Lord his righteousness*? You will acknowledge, that a number of wicked persons, which the Scriptures make mention of, were near heaven, however much they appeared to be in the way

way that leads to hell. The thief on the cross was near it, although he was an heir of hell when he was hung up. But the gracious Redeemer, who was suffering beside him, proclaimed the glory of his own cross, and the eternal happiness of that poor man, in these delightful words, *Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* Saul was near hell, it would appear, when he was persecuting the church, and blaspheming the name of Jesus. Yet, says Christ, *He is a chosen vessel unto me.* A revelation of Christ converted him. These, who *killed the Prince of life, and crucified the Lord of glory,* might surely have been considered as a set of men appointed unto destruction. Yet even of them a number was saved, as appears from Acts ii. Believe it, then, that in point of external privilege, you are just as near heaven as these or other persons were, while they continued in a natural estate. Remember, that you have the same object of faith they had, the same warrant for faith, and the same salvation offered to you. So that you are really raised to the very threshold of glory, or, as the text expresses it, you are *exalted unto heaven.*

4. This may be said of these who enjoy the gospel dispensation, because they cannot miss heaven, but by despising it. It may seem strange, even to suppose such a thing as this, but it is no less true than strange, that gospel rejecters really lose heaven, on account of their having no right desires of obtaining it. Yet if we ask a person, whether he would wish to be in heaven, he will readily answer in the affirmative. He does not, however, choose to obtain it in the way of divine appointment. He aims at the possession of eternal happiness, according to some other method than that which the wisdom of God hath devised.

All who refuse to submit to Christ, as *The Lord their righteousness*, and to take eternal life as a free gift through his blood, are to be held as persons who despise heaven, and love hell. Love hell! Who would do that? Yes; all who are not brought, by means of the gospel, to unite with Christ, are, in his view, in love with death and hell. Take his own word for it, in Prov. viii. 36. *He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.*

These who enjoy the gospel, are addressed in the same manner as Moses did the Israelites of old, Deut. xxx. 19. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live.* In this way God speaks to you by the law and by the gospel. In the one he sets death, and in the other life, before you. The broken law points to death and hell, the gospel discovers life and heaven. Therefore, every person, who perisheth under the means of grace, must do so of choice. Remember the complaint of Christ about the unbelievers in his time, John v. 40. *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* Too many gospel-hearers are set in opposition to the way of salvation through the righteousness of Christ alone. They either remain careless about heaven altogether, or, if they seem to have any concern about it, they will have it *on their own terms*. But let such persons be assured, that to reject and oppose the method of salvation by free grace, as revealed in the gospel, is to choose death. So that no person goes to hell under the gospel-dispensation, who has not himself to blame for losing heaven.—But we now proceed,

III. To

III. To consider the import of the threatening in the text against those who misuse the gospel-dispensation. *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.*

1. This imports, that persons may remain graceless, under great gospel-privileges. Capernaum, you see, was so highly favoured with the glad tidings of peace and salvation, that she was exalted unto heaven, in comparison of Sodom and Gomorrah, and yet she was in danger of hell. It intimates, that Christ's ministry left the great body of the inhabitants as graceless as it found them. Although the gospel shall not be in vain in the Lord, as to all who enjoy it, yet there are many to whom it is only as *sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*. Many *make a fair shew in the flesh*,—have a promising outward appearance,—who remain strangers to internal Christianity, or genuine religion, Rom. ii. 28, 29. *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

Many Christians, like the Jews, rest satisfied with their religious privileges, without having any experience of a saving change produced in their hearts by means of them. They are Christians, they attend ordinances, they are admitted to the seals of the covenant of grace; and, therefore, they think all is well with them; although they were never awakened to any proper sense of sin; never saw the absolute necessity of an interest in the Saviour, nor ever knew any thing about uniting with him by faith. They can, perhaps, talk a great deal about the

the doctrinal part of religion, and, so far as they have heard, they may be able to say something about the practical part of it also; but they can say nothing about it from experience. They know nothing about the soul-troubles of the Christian, arising from a prevailing sense of sin, the weakness of faith, or the absence of the Redeemer. Nor do they know any thing of the peace and joy which he feels, as flowing from an interest in Christ by faith, and an improvement of the promises in him. They thus continue graceless under the means of grace. They have no more of the Christian than the name, like that church, to which our Lord said, *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*, Rev. iii. 1.

2. This threatening imports, that the Lord takes particular notice of what privileges are enjoyed by a people. You see here, that he observed how highly exalted Capernaum was, where he himself had laboured much in the course of his ministry, and where he had performed many wonderful works. He contrasts her gracious opportunities with the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, which had enjoyed nothing of that kind. So whatever privileges he is pleased to confer upon a person or people, are strictly recorded by him still. When he shews them the great things of his law, when he gives them repeated opportunities of attending upon him in his ordinances, and when they have one offer of life and salvation after another, he registers all these in the book of his remembrance. Gospel-hearer, it is possible, that you have taken no notice of these, and have made no account of them. You have put no value upon all the Sabbaths, sermons, and other ordinances

dinances of Christ, which you have enjoyed. But remember, that he hath taken special observation of every one of them, and how you have improved them. And if all the means of grace, with which you have been favoured, be of no saving effect, he will call you to a strict and impartial reckoning about them. Repeated messages of mercy, if misimproved, will be followed by judgment without mercy, Isa. xxviii. 13. *The word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little; that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.*

3. This threatening imports, that the final despisers of the gospel will never be so near heaven as they presently are. While Christ continued in Capernaum, she was not far from the kingdom of God, in respect of privilege. But, seeing she disregarded his ministry, and despised his salvation, she would never be so near heaven again, but be placed at the most dreadful distance from it, by being brought down to hell. So will it be with all who finally reject Christ in the gospel. While they live in the visible church, they enjoy a rare privilege. Being within hearing of the gospel, they are within reach of heaven. Those in hell can never get into it. Those without the church, are ignorant of that *life and immortality* which the word of the Lord hath brought to light. But those, to whom the word of salvation is sent, have present access and warrant to enter, by faith, upon the begun enjoyment of eternal life. There is set before them an open door, and neither man nor devil can shut it, if they shut it not themselves, by their unbelief.

But

But if persons die in a state of estrangement from Christ, they will never be so near heaven again as they now are. All gracious access to the Redeemer will for ever be ended as to them. There is a passage from this world to heaven; but there is no passage between the different states in the eternal world. Hence Abraham is represented as saying to the rich man in hell, Luke xvi. 26. *Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.* What a tormenting reflection must it be to the gospel-despiser, when he is for ever removed from all hopes of heaven, that he was once so near it, and yet lost it, by his own unbelief, obstinacy, and folly! Therefore think upon this in time, *lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof: and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me?*

4. The threatening in the text imports, that the condemnation and misery of gospel-despisers will be greatly aggravated. Their sin is great, and their punishment must be so too. This is intimated in our Lord's words to these sinful cities mentioned in the text and context. *I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon,—and for the land of Sodom,—in the day of judgment, than for you.* Though Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to the most abominable immoralities, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, yet they have not that accumulated load of guilt lying upon them, that all the abusers of the gospel-dispensation have.

Though

Though they are *brought down to hell*, yet it will not be said of them, that they were *exalted unto heaven*, as the inhabitants of Capernaum were, and as these of every city and town, enjoying the gospel of Christ, still are.

The misery of these persons must be inconceivably great, who, from the gate of heaven, are plunged into everlasting perdition. This is taught us in that striking parable, Matth. xxv. 1.—13. We are there informed, that, *while the foolish virgins went to buy oil for their lamps, which had gone out, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the foolish virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.* A similar representation of the dreadful state of gospel-despisers we have in Luke xiii. 25.—28. There the persons who *have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence, and in whose streets he hath taught*, are said to *stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* They are answered once and again, *I know you not whence you are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* They are here sentenced, as it were, from the very gate of glory. "*I know you not,*" saith the Judge of all the earth. "*You need not stand and knock there, and cry to me to open. I open to none but my friends; but as for you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me.*" Shall not the sinners in Zion be afraid, and fearfulness surprise the hypocrites? Shall not the faces of all gospel-despisers gather blackness, when they shall see and feel that they have fallen from a great height into an abyss of misery? Not only shall the loose, but the sober

sober professor of religion, who is a stranger to *the power of godliness*, find his hell hotter than that of those, who never had such privileges, nor made such a profession. The farther that an hypocrite goes in attempting to impose upon God and his people, the more dreadful must the issue be with him. He is secure. He thinks himself sure of eternal happiness, because he is a professor of religion. He has a false peace upon that ground. Though an heir of hell, he presumes that he is going to heaven. What a disappointment must this man meet with? He is asleep in his natural estate, and never opens his eyes, till he be in hell. What a mercy is it, when men are awakened in time, and disposed to *know the things which belong to their peace*, before they are *hid from their eyes*!

5. The threatening in the text imports, that the condemnation of the final abusers of gospel-privileges is certain and infallible. This is the sentence of the Redeemer, who is the righteous Judge. It contains a warning to all to guard against the misimprovement of religious privileges, and it expresses the doom of these who finally misimprove them. *How shall they escape, who neglect so great salvation?* He who is *mighty to save* will prove, in the direful experience of all his enemies, that he is also *mighty to destroy*. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

We

We shall improve this subject in some inferences.

1. We may learn, what a great privilege God hath conferred, and still is conferring, upon us, by placing us under the means of grace. We are *exalted unto heaven*. We do not, indeed, enjoy Christ's bodily presence, or his personal ministry, but we have these very ordinances, which he hath appointed in his church, and by which he promotes a work of grace among men. The only way to heaven is set before us, and God is warranting us to come into it, and to walk in it. He is shewing us how to escape the wrath to come, and pointing the near and ready way to eternal life. And, if we despise his gracious calls by the word, we would not believe, although he were present among us in a bodily manner. Are we better than the inhabitants of Capernaum, and more naturally disposed to *repent and believe the gospel* than they were? No, in nowise. Yet here we find the preacher is Christ himself, who, to evidence that he was a teacher come from God, exerted his divine power by many *mighty works*; but *they repented not*, ver. 20.

2. We may learn, what a blessed condition believers are in. They are not only *exalted unto heaven*, in respect of outward privileges, as all the members of the visible church are, but they have a sure interest in heaven, and may be said, in one sense, to be in it. *We which have believed do enter into rest*, says the apostle, Heb. iv. 3. As an inheritance is the real property of an heir in his minority, though he is not put in full possession of it, so heaven itself is the just inheritance of the saints below, as well as of those above. Believers have *entered into* it already, in the begun enjoyment of God's favour and love,

of conformity to him, and of communion with him. They are *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*.

3. We may infer, matter of humiliation. We profess this day to be humbling ourselves before God, because of our sins; and one special ground of this exercise is the dreadful abuse of religious privileges, with which we and the present generation are chargeable. Are we not *exalted unto heaven*, in enjoying Bibles, Sabbaths, sermons, sacraments, and the other institutions of Christ? Yet how general is the misimprovement of these that obtains? We meddle with the present and future state of no man. But we may say, without a blush, that by far the greater part of the present generation, of which we have any knowledge or intelligence, does not give any charitable evidence of real religion. God and heaven do not seem to be in their thoughts, because they do not appear in the tenor of their conversation. Would wickedness prevail so generally, if the doctrines of Christ were believed and improved? No; for the gospel of *the grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*. We have, therefore, great reason to mourn over, and to be humbled before God on account of, the grievous abuse of all the ordinances of Christ. Has not God the same ground to complain of us, as of his professing people in the time of the Prophet Isaiah? *Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* Isa. v. 3, 4.

4. We

4. We may learn, that we should exercise a fear of jealousy about ourselves, lest we be chargeable with the sin of Capernaum, and so in danger of her doom. May persons be *exalted unto heaven*, by the enjoyment of gospel-privileges, by their visible profession, and even by common attainments in religion, and yet, after all, be *brought down to hell*? What reason is there to beware of unfounded security about ourselves, to guard against presumption, and to be frequently examining ourselves, whether we be in the faith? How dreadful, if, after all the gracious opportunities we have had, and the religious profession we have made, we shall at last meet with that silencing repulse, *Depart from me, I never knew you!* Ye cannot, my friends, be too humble, too self-diffident, and too careful to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Even an apostle said, *Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief, Heb. iv.*

I. II.

We exhort you all to be employed in earnest prayer for God's blessing upon your gospel-privileges. Without this, they will be of no saving advantage to you.—Bless the Lord for bringing you so near heaven; and, when *the gates of righteousness* are opened to you, study to *enter in*, and *praise the Lord*.—Humble yourselves before him, because of the *misimprovement* of the gospel and gospel ordinances, which, you must be conscious, you are guilty of,—that your hearts are so little set on heaven,—that you so seldom meditate upon it,—that so little of it appears in your lives,—and that you do not so ear-

nestly improve Christ by faith, who is able to make you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.—Let those, who have hitherto rejected the Saviour, and despised the offers of his grace, consider what will be the consequence of their continuing always to do so. They are now *exalted unto heaven*. They have present access to Christ, who purchased it by his blood. In the way of believing his testimony, and receiving him as freely offered in the gospel, they shall be *justified by his grace, and made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*. But, if they continue to harden their hearts, to set at nought God's counsel, and so count themselves unworthy of everlasting life, then Capernaum's doom shall be theirs. *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.*

S E R.

S E R M O N XI.

WITH THE PROFESSORS OF RELIGION ARE
MANY SINS AGAINST THE LORD *.

2 CHRON. xxviii. 10.

— *Are there not with you, even with you, sins
against the Lord your God?*

IN the beginning of this chapter, we find Ahaz, the son of Jotham, set upon the throne of Judah, which he occupied sixteen years. He acted a part very opposite to his two predecessors in that office. His character and conduct are pointed out negatively in the close of ver. 1. *He did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father.* They are pointed out positively in the verses which follow. He was most vehemently given to idolatry, and carried his ungodly zeal for it to the most extravagant and dreadful length. *He made molten images, and worshipped what he had made. He burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and sacrificed his sons and daughters unto devils.* In short, every high place, every hill, and every green tree, was witness to his abominations.

Such a dreadful course of impiety and wickedness God could not but take notice of, and resent. He

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accordingly

* This Sermon was preached on a Humiliation-day.

accordingly delivered him into the hand of the King of Syria, who smote him, and carried away a multitude of his people captive. Nor did they only suffer by the sword of their natural enemies, but even *Pekab, the son of Remaliab*, who reigned in the sister kingdom of Israel, came upon them with his armies, and smote them *with a great slaughter*. No less than *an hundred and twenty thousand of the valiant men* of Judah fell by his sword *in one day*. And besides the number of men that were slain, a still greater number of women and children were taken prisoners. In ver. 8. you read, that *the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren, two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria*. Such was the method God took to plead his controversy against treacherous Judah. He made apostate Israel the *rod of his indignation*, to chastise her for her iniquities.

When the children of Israel were returning to Samaria, with their hands full of spoil, and their hearts elated with joy on account of their success, they were met by a prophet of the Lord, called *Oded*. Perhaps, when they saw this holy man present himself before their host, they expected him to applaud their conduct, and join with them in their triumph. But very different from this was the reception he gave them. His message from his Master to them, was to inform them of the true reason of their success, to point out their sin in the management of their victory, and to direct them as to their conduct towards their captives. *He went out before the host, that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand; and ye have slain*

slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. The Israelites might probably imagine, that the victory they had obtained, was owing to the favour God had for them, or to their superior prowess or skill in arms. But the prophet informs them, that God had only made use of them as *his battle axe* to chastise Judah, with whom he was wroth on account of their sins. Yet although this was the case, these Israelites were not innocent or free of blood guiltiness in what they had done; because they had not fought with Judah, as persons avenging the Lord's quarrel, but from a principle of deadly hatred against their brethren, and with implacable fury and rage. This rendered their victory inglorious, and made their cruel conduct cry to heaven for vengeance. *Ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.*

As they had shed much blood in the field of battle, so they meant to treat their prisoners in an imperious and cruel manner. *Now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bond-men and bond-women unto you.* Though they were sprung from the same father, and born free as themselves, yet they had a design of treating them as their own slaves, and perhaps of disposing of them as such to others.

The words of our text contain a striking question that was put to them by the prophet. *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* It is a solemn appeal to their consciences, if there were not as many, and as great provocations taking place among them, as among the children of Judah, whom God had delivered into their hands. By it the prophet meant, that their own consciences should declare that they were very far from being innocent.

nocent. They no doubt imagined, that their brethren of Judah were very guilty persons, very great sinners. The prophet grants all this. They *bad forsaken the Lord God of their fathers*, ver. 6. And it was *because the Lord God was wroth with them* on that account, that he *bad delivered them into the hand* of the Israelites, ver. 9. But this by no means inferred, that these very Israelites, who were the conquerors, were free of all blame, or that God had no quarrel with them. "No," as if the prophet had said, "ye have conquered, that is true; ye have spilt much blood, and have taken many prisoners; and all this power ye have over them is from *God's being wroth with them*: But think not, that ye yourselves have no ground to fear the divine displeasure; for *are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God*."

These words may, doubtless, be justly viewed as an appeal that God is making to us. We profess to be witnesses for Christ, in opposition to the current of apostasy from attained-to reformation, which all ranks in these lands have fallen into. We profess to mourn over the indignities done to Christ and his cause, by National Churches, and various Sectaries that abound. Many of the sins of the land are mentioned in the public Acts of that body, of which we form a part. But it will be a sad matter, if we be found paying all our attention to the sins of others, and yet be careless about those iniquities which are taking place among ourselves. We, as well as others, ought to plead guilty before God. What person, what family, what congregation, can wipe their mouths, and say, that they are innocent?

It therefore becomes us on a day of humiliation, to be free and explicit in confessing our own sins, as well as in mourning over the sins of others, before the Lord. Should we be so *overmuch* righteous, as to imagine, that guilt lies only at the door of those whom we bear testimony against, and none, or very little, at our own, the Lord appeals the matter to ourselves, as in his sight. *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*

What we mean, in farther discoursing from the subject, is,

I. To make a few observations, implied in the text;

II. Mention some of these sins against the Lord our God, which are to be found among us; and then

Conclude with a few inferences for improvement.—We are,

I. To make a few observations, implied in the text.

1. A people who have been remarkably owned by the Lord, may be guilty of many offences against him. This was the case with Israel. They had been highly favoured by the Lord. The longer that Moses considered their privileges, the more he admired the kindness of God towards them, Deut. xxxiii. 29. *Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!* They had a supernatural revelation of God made unto them, and not only enjoyed the symbols, but his real gracious presence among them; while other nations were left without

without any such dispensation of grace and goodness towards them. He *shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel; he dealt not so with any nation.* He often made bare his holy arm in their behalf. They fought against very powerful and numerous enemies, and because *the battle was the Lord's*, they conquered. Yet what a great degree of apostasy did they run into? They *forgot God that made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation.* They *polluted his sanctuary, they changed his ordinances, and brake the everlasting covenant.* And although he still had a holy seed among them, and continued his kindness to them, yet this was no evidence that his anger was turned away, or the causes of it removed: for still *with them were sins against the Lord their God.*

If then God's ancient Israel so dreadfully apostatized from him, and *provoked him to anger with their graven images*, it should not be doubted or denied, that a people whom he owns as his, may act a similar part. That the bulk of the people in these lands have done so, must be evident to every thinking and unprejudiced person. *The gold is become dim, the most fine gold is changed.* This also is the case among us. Though our profession be scriptural and good, yet are there not many offences against God taking place among us? The question is not, whether we have gone all the length of apostasy that the body of the Israelites did? It is ground of thankfulness, that we have not been permitted to fall into open idolatry. But are there not evils chargeable upon many of us, that are dishonourable to God, and injurious to ourselves? If this be granted, as it

must

must be, then *with us, even with us, are sins against the Lord our God.*

2. The sins of a professing people are aggravated, from the relation that they stand in to God, and he to them. It was an addition to the guilt of the Israelites, that their sins were committed against *the Lord their God*; against God, who had shewn them much kindness, by taking them for his peculiar treasure, and making himself theirs by covenant. The iniquities of their heathen neighbours were against the Lord; but they fell far short of the sins of Israel, in point of aggravation, because they had never been favoured with such a revelation of God, as that which Israel enjoyed. God, in having become *their God*, and in taking them to be *his people*, rendered their sins of a *scarlet and crimson* colour.

And still the sins of a professing people must have peculiar aggravations attending them. They rebel not only against his authority, but against his love and goodness. Among men, that person is abhorred and execrated, who behaves himself unseemly to his benefactor. Who will not despise the man, who acts ungratefully, when favours are multiplied and continued toward him? How great then must the sins of professors be, when committed against such love and goodness as the Lord shows to them? It is wicked in a servant to rebel against his master; but it is peculiarly atrocious for a child to rebel against his father,—his father, who hath fed and clothed him, who hath taught and protected him. Yet such is the nature of the sins of a professing people. And, in this case, God says, as in Isa. i. 2. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children,*

dren, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but my people doth not know, Israel doth not consider.

These who have the Lord as their God, are under vows and obligations to obey and serve him. Often did Israel of old make professions of this kind. They with one voice said, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.* They entered into a curse and into an oath to walk in God's law. When he avouched them to be his peculiar people, they also avouched the Lord to be their God, and to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice. After such repeated and solemn professions of submission and obedience to the Lord, how dreadful behoved their apostasy and wickedness to be, seeing it was the most glaring breach of such vows? And as a professing people are still under obligations of that kind, is it possible that their sins should not have the same complicated guilt in them? That we are all under vows to be the Lord's, and to serve him, is what none of us can refuse, without giving up with our baptism. But we likewise come under such obligations at the Lord's table, as well as in personal and public covenanting. Are not our sins then the most palpable breaches of these vows? Are they not a *going so far back*, after *having opened our mouths to the Lord*? It must be a great aggravation of our sins, that they are committed in opposition to many fair promises and solemn vows. This renders the sin of professors more dishonourable to God, and criminal in his eye, than that of unenlightened nations, or even of careless and carnal men, who may be in our neighbourhood. These do not profess to be

be the Lord's, or to serve him, but we say and do not.

3. Very often it is difficult to convince a professing people of their sins against the Lord their God. So much seems to be taught by the repetition in this text: *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* The prophet brings the charge home to them again and again, knowing that it was what many of them did not apprehend, and scarce would grant. Had he represented the Syrians as great sinners, they would have agreed with him. Had he rested with saying, that Judah had forsaken the Lord, and was guilty of many provocations, they would heartily have assented to the truth of it. But that a people, who had been helped to obtain a great victory, should have many iniquities among them to provoke the Lord to anger, was what they little attended to. *But*, says the prophet, *Are there not with you?* Nay; do not stare and wonder! *are there not even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*

This observation will still be found to have too much foundation. If we apply it to individuals, how difficult is it sometimes to convince even a good man that he has erred? How will he not endeavour to shun reproof, or put it by him, as long as possible. We need scarce wonder at this in the case of any, when we consider how long David was of taking guilt to himself, in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah. He was secure, though guilty of adultery, and he proceeded to murder. It does not appear that he had any great checks of conscience on account of what he had done. He was for a time *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. Even the

apposite and applicable parable of Nathan did not carry conviction to him. He thought that the prophet spake not of him, but of another. And never did he take with, or was duly sensible of his guilt, till the Lord laid home the charge with power, by means of his prophet, *Thou art the man: As if he had said in the language of our text, With thee, even with thee, are these sins against the Lord thy God.*

And if this observation apply to individuals, it does so equally to a people, especially when religion is not thriving among them. They are quick-sighted as to the sins of others, but very blind as to their own. And when their sins are charged upon them, they are in hazard of rejecting the charge, and disesteeming the messenger. Let the conduct of God's professing people of old, upon many occasions, bear witness. When they ceased not to reprove them for their sins, and lay before them the danger they were in, *they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.* Would to God, that there were not too much of the same perverse and untractable spirit taking place among us.

4. We ought carefully to attend to every just and honest reproof for our sins against the Lord our God. The reproof in the text is particularly addressed to the Israelites, and therefore deserved to be particularly attended to by them. *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* If it was the prophet's duty to address them in so express and particular a manner, it was their duty to attend to it. And that attention is to be paid to the messages of God in his word, even when they are for reproof and correction, as well as for instruction

and

and comfort, is evident from his frequently calling men to attend, before the message be delivered. Often do we find his declarations to the Church prefaced with *hear* or *hearken*. This not only showed, that the matter delivered was of importance in itself, but was also of particular concern to them.

Such attention is still to be paid by us to the messages of God in his word. And would we properly consider the Author of them, we would not be found so careless and indifferent about them, as we too readily are. It is God himself who reproves us, when the word either read or preached discovers to us our sins. We do not take up the reproof in a proper light, if we view it not as coming from him. And if God himself speak to us, how ought we to attend? If we will not hearken unto him, whose voice will we pay respect unto? *Hear ye*, said the Prophet Jeremiah, *and give ear; be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken.*

To despise reproofs for sin, is a very speedy way to bring judgment upon ourselves. *He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* And the prophet, in the passage where our text lies, intimates to the children of Israel, that their taking with the reproof, and complying with the directions he gave them, was the only way to prevent the wrath of God from falling on them. If, on the contrary, they refused to listen to him, they would become more than ever the objects of God's displeasure; *for the fierce wrath of the Lord was upon them*, ver. 11. Taking the matter in this light, it is not only a grievous offence, but a piece of the greatest folly, to *set at nought God's counsel, and refuse his reproof,*—

while it provokes God to deal out judgment to his adversaries, and even fatherly recompenses to his own people. The wise man speaks of this conduct as unreasonable and foolish, Prov. xii. 1. *He that hateth reproof is brutish.*—When, therefore, the Lord reproves us for our sins against him; when he puts the matter home to our consciences, *Are there not with you sins against the Lord your God?* It is our duty, to take with the reproof, and to repent and do our first works.

5. Persons, whose consciences are not blinded, will readily take with the charge of their having with them sins against the Lord their God. The prophet here does not plainly assert, that they had been guilty of many sins against the Lord; but his words imply a very strong assertion of this, as he appeals to themselves. *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* He knew, that if their consciences were not seared as with a hot iron, they could not deny that their iniquities were manifold and great. He knew, that they would be self-condemned, when he laid home the matter to them. Their consciences within them would concur with the word of God, which he delivered to them, in declaring, that *evils past reckoning up encompassed them.*

So will it be with a person or people, when God's reproofs get a proper hearing, or due attention paid to them. They will readily plead guilty before him. Sometimes indeed the consciences of a people may be so stupified and blinded, that they may see very little or no sin about themselves; or, that they may see many sins about them, but not the sin which they are reprov'd for. How readily will men own that

that they are finners, and that they sin in all they do; and yet if you specify one particular sin which you reckon them chargeable with, they will immediately stand upon their defence, and either deny the charge, or endeavour to extenuate their guilt, and apologize for their conduct. Thus, though they make a general acknowledgment of their sins, yet were you to name their sins one by one, and charge these upon them, very probably you would scarce find them, in their own account, guilty of any sin. This is an evidence of great impenitency and dreadful ignorance of themselves. And such persons are in remarkable danger of divine anger, Jer. ii. 35. *Yet thou sayest, because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me: Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.*

The consciences of a people may be blinded by pride or prejudice, so that they may not discern or acknowledge their sins against the Lord. They may be proud of their profession and privileges, of their gifts and attainments, and so secure under them, as to reckon themselves in no danger of doing any thing very offensive to the Lord. They may have such a prejudice in their own favours, as to imagine that they have attained within a very small degree of perfection. And hence when they are reprov'd and threatened on account of their sins, they are at a great loss to conceive how such reproofs and threatenings can have any application to them. This seems to have been very much the case with the Jews. They rested satisfied that they were persons of a distinguished profession from others. Their privileges were great and manifold, and had been long continued with them. And thus they pleased themselves,

themselves, that they were by profession the people of God, without examining whether their conduct was worthy of such a high character. The consequence was, that when the Lord brought evil upon them, they were difficulted to find out the cause of it; and accordingly are represented as speaking to this purpose, Jer. xvi. 10. *Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? or, what is our iniquity? or, what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?*

Perhaps one reason why a professing people may be so blind about their sins, is, that they more frequently measure their conduct by that of others, than by the word of God. They compare their own life by that of another person, who has perhaps little or no regard for religion; and they measure the general practice of the society they belong to, by that of another society; and hence, because they find not such blemishes about themselves, or the society they are connected with, as appear to be about others, they reckon that they have no remarkable spots about them at all. But will our not being so guilty as others, tend at all to prove that we are innocent? Because we may not be so erroneous in our principles, or profane and debauched in our practice, as others may be, will it follow, that we have no sins at all against the Lord our God? No person can be supposed, when he reflects for a moment, to argue in such an unreasonable manner. That we go not the length of wickedness that others do, is ground of thankfulness; but where we have sinned, we should be ready to acknowledge it before the Lord. And if we have a just view of ourselves, of our awful shortcomings, and daily transgressions; if our consciences

sciences are not fallen asleep altogether, we will see how pointedly the appeal in this text applies to us, *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*—We go on,

II. To mention some of these sins against the Lord our God, which, we have reason to fear, are with us.

1. Our not being properly affected with the sins of others, seems to be one of our sins against the Lord. It is no Bible doctrine, that a person is only to be concerned about his own sins, and to pay no attention to these of others. That we are to *mourn like the doves in the valley, every one for his iniquity*, must be true: But that we are to be in no manner concerned about the backslidings of others, is as evidently false. It is impossible, that a true Christian in suitable exercise, can behold the sins of a person or church, without any emotion; seeing that his Lord is greatly dishonoured, and his authority trampled upon thereby. Whatever tends to pour contempt on Christ's name and authority, must be grieving to his people. They must take notice of it, and bear testimony against it.

Accordingly the testimony which we espouse, is stated not only for truth and duty, as laid down in the word of God and our standards founded thereon; but also against the deviations from these in former and present times. And we suppose that there is no serious person, though not of our communion, who will lay aside his prejudices, and think like himself for once; we say, there is no serious person, when he takes a view of the sins and defections of the church and nation, but will see evident reason for such a testimony. The sins which are therein testified

fied against, it is not our business at present to enumerate. We ill deserve the name of witnesses for Christ, if we be ignorant about what they are.

But we fear that we are not so deeply affected with sorrow on account of them, as we ought to be. It is not enough that we know what the sins of others are, (we mean, the public iniquities of the land); nor is it enough that we openly declare our disapprobation of them; but what heart-felt concern are we under on account of them? Are we not too ready to think and speak of them in a dry and indifferent manner? Does it touch us in the most tender part, to find the name of Christ blasphemed; the leading doctrines of the Christian system impugned; the ordinances of the Lord prostituted, in the scandalous being made as welcome to them in many places, as the most circumspect; the headship of Christ over his church usurped; the discipline of his house either laid aside or abused; and his laws daily made void by a profane people? Are we like the Psalmist, really *grieved when we behold transgressors*? *Do rivers of waters run from our eyes, because they keep not God's law?* Doth our concern and sorrow on account of the abominations taking place in principle and practice, lead us to the throne of grace in behalf of a backsliding church and people? Do we thus wrestle for them in prayer, saying as Solomon, (1 Kings viii. 36.) *Hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, and teach them the good way wherein they should walk.* It is to be lamented, that there is so little of this exercise taking place among us. And we should be ready to acknowledge, that we are far from being

so affected with the sins of those whom we bear testimony against, as we ought to be.

2. Ingratitude for the Lord's goodness to us is a sin with us against the Lord our God. This was none of the least of Israel's sins. They were upbraided for it as early as Moses's days. Deut. xxxii. 6. *O foolish people, and unwise, do ye thus requite the Lord? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?* And this sin continued all along to be one of the general features of that people.

We have too much reason to charge ourselves with it. We have had distinguishing tokens of the Lord's goodness towards us. Without insisting on what he hath done for this church and land in general, which others, as well as we, are indebted to him for; there is much of his goodness towards us to be seen in our present comfortable circumstances. It was great goodness of the Lord, when the national church was become very corrupt and erroneous in her doctrine, tyrannical in her government, and slothful in her discipline, that he inclined the hearts of a few to bear testimony against her defections, in a state of separation from her communion. It is great kindness, that the cause and testimony of Jesus has been handed down from these Fathers to us their children, in agreeableness to the word of God. And notwithstanding that too many, who have been in accession to that testimony, have gone out from us, yet what a mercy is it, that the whole body has not been left to turn the back upon it? Amidst all the various contendings for the truth, and the seemingly disastrous circumstances that have attended these, yet the truth is still among us. Can we think too highly

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ly of a pure gospel-dispensation, when it is so rarely enjoyed by many of our fellow countrymen? Can we too highly esteem solemn ordinances dispensed to those only who have the marks of discipleship, which the Scripture requires; while among others, the ignorant, the erroneous, and the scandalous, are admitted to them indiscriminately? And to say no more, can we be too thankful for the outward peace and tranquillity we enjoy, in prosecuting the ends of our testimony? In the latter half of the former century, those who bare witness for Christ, and could not join in the fashionable profession of that day, had to do it at the hazard of their lives. It is a great mercy, that though few approve of our profession, yet we have none to make us afraid.

These are only *parts of God's ways* of goodness towards us. But who among us can say that we praise him as we ought? It is to be feared, that we are too chargeable with *what* was said of these, (Psal. cvi. 7.) *They remembered not the multitude of his mercies.* We have been a considerable time in the enjoyment of our privileges, and a grateful sense of them is much worn off our minds. But let us all be assured, that the Lord who hath *dealt so bountifully with us*, looks for a grateful return from us. And all the return we can make him, is to entertain a sense of his goodness, and acknowledge it wholly as his doing.

3. The unbelief that prevails among us is one of our sins against the Lord our God. This was the predominant sin, on account of which God gave up with the Jewish nation. Rom. xi. 20. *Because of unbelief they were broken off.* There are sad evidences of its prevailing awfully among us. What bad reception

ception does the gospel of salvation meet with from us in general? Is there not too much ground for the old complaint; *Who hath believed our report!* How few mix faith with the bearing of the word, though otherwise it cannot profit them? The want of faith, at least in the lively exercise thereof, is evidenced by the careless lives, the unguarded actions of a great part of us. Faith is a grace that *purifies the heart*, and must necessarily produce holiness in the life and conversation. And wherever there is little or nothing of this last to be seen, it is a sad sign that unbelief prevails in the heart.

There is but little appearance of any great ingathering of sinners to Christ by the gospel. Very few comparatively are turned from the error of their ways unto the living God. And how much does unbelief prevail among the Lord's own people? May not Christ still upbraid us, as he did his disciples of old, *O ye of little faith?* How little is the word of God credited? How little dependance is exercised upon his promises? How little of his glory is seen in his ordinances? How little of the boldness and confidence of faith is experienced in our approaches to the throne of grace? These things show how rare faith is among us, especially in the proper exercise thereof.

The consequences of this are sad. The gospel is not listened to as God's voice to us; Christ is despised and rejected by us; his righteousness and grace are not seen to be needed, and so are not improved; and professors satisfy themselves with a bare attendance on divine institutions, without meeting with God in them.

4. Barrenness

4. Barrenness under the means of grace is a sin with many of us against the Lord our God. This is the necessary consequence of the former. While unbelief prevails, mens souls cannot prosper under the gospel-dispensation. And unfruitfulness under the pains God is at with us, is a sad and God-provoking sin. See how the Lord threatened to deal with his people of old on account of it, Isa. v. 4, 5. *What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and I will breuk down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned, nor digged.* Alas, when God looks on his vineyard among us, how little growth in grace and holiness will he find taking place?

There are various mournful evidences of our barrenness. A sad wearying under ordinances is none of the least of these. How little pleasure do many find in waiting on God in the courts of his house? How uneasy are they when long detained there? The time has been, when some of the servants of the Lord have taken pleasure to preach, and his people taken pleasure to hear them, from morning to the evening. But now a long sermon is a hateful, a dreaded thing. How heavily do the hours drag along on the Sabbath? It is by far the most tedious day in all the week in the opinions of many; and would they be but honest enough, they would join those in the prophet's days, who said, *When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath,*

Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? Oh, how few are of the Psalmist's mind, who counted a day in God's courts better than a thousand elsewhere; and chose rather to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness. Now, this wearying of the day and ordinances of God, is a sad sign that persons are not prospering under them.

This is also evidenced, by a careless conduct and behaviour, both before and after waiting on God in his ordinances. We are but little concerned to wrestle with the Lord in prayer, for his blessing upon the means of grace, before we attend on them. This is an evidence, that we have but little expectation or desire after God's enlivening presence in these ordinances. And our carelessness in meditating upon, what our eyes see, and our ears bear, and our hands handle of the word of life, afterwards, is a sign that we are strangers to real communion with God in his ordinances. How is the morning and evening of the Sabbath consumed in carnal exercises and converse, without properly reflecting upon the holiness of the day, and the solemnity of the worship required of us thereon. We should mind the divine order, *Sanctify my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary, I am the Lord.*

In short, if we look into ourselves, we will find many sad evidences of a spiritual decay. How weak is our faith, our hope, our love to God and his ways? How dead are our affections? How much set on things on the earth, and not on things above? How seldom are we employed in thinking upon Christ, his righteousness, and grace? What little heart have we for religious exercises? How careless are we in general, though the Lord hath evidently withdrawn

himself from his ordinances, and *gone to his place, till we acknowledge our iniquity?* How faint and languishing are these desires after him, that any of the Lord's own people attain to? All these are evidences of a spiritual consumption; and that our progress under the means of grace is not equal to what might have been expected.

5. The secret neglect of known duties is perhaps a sin with many of us against the Lord our God. By our profession we are bound to observe every duty and ordinance which the Lord hath appointed in his word. There is no useless or unnecessary institution has any authority from him. Of consequence, whatever he hath appointed, is necessary for the glory of his name, and the edification of his people; yet it is to be feared, that too many who bear the name of witnesses for Christ, are guilty of omitting or neglecting some of these duties. We have not indeed access to follow one another at every time, and in every place, that we may observe the conduct of each other. We cannot know with certainty who are conscientious in the performance of closet duties, such as secret prayer, meditation, and self-examination. God and conscience are properly witnesses of our faithfulness or unfaithfulness in these exercises. But if we might be allowed to guess from the habitually carnal conversation and behaviour of many, there seems to be reason to fear, that they are not men given to prayer. And if there are any whose consciences charge them with the neglect of this duty, they ought to know, that they are guilty of a heinous sin against the Lord their God. His people are a praying people. A gracious soul cannot live without this exercise. It is the character of

every godly one, that he makes his prayer to God in a time when he may be found.

The duties of the family are also too much neglected. We would indeed hope and believe, that such care is taken, as that persons who habitually neglect these duties, are not admitted to the full privileges of church-membership with us: because such families can scarce be reckoned to have the truth of religion in them, more than heathens. But though there may be no habitual neglecters of these duties among us, yet many perform them very partially, and even overlook and omit them on many occasions. And when they are dealt with, either by a ministry, or fellow Christians, what light and frivolous excuses will they plead for their conduct? Many lay aside these duties in the morning altogether, and plead that they have not time, on account of their worldly avocations, to perform them. If a person, indeed, be necessarily called away from his family, before the praises of God can be celebrated; and if he have no person left behind, whose knowledge and Christian prudence may be such, as that he can be entrusted with the performance of that duty, the excuse may be valid. But when persons are not called away from their families, nor have any thing more among their hands than their ordinary employments, and yet cannot get the morning or evening sacrifices of praise and prayer offered up, is what we cannot conceive. We do not think, that God ever designed to fill the hands of any of his people so full of worldly business, as to juggle out, or leave no room for any of the duties, which are more immediately owed to himself. And we are afraid, that the true reason of the neglect of these duties is, that persons have not a

right liking to them, and therefore make any little thing that comes in the way an excuse for not performing them. But let us remember, that *it is a good thing to shew forth his loving kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.* It is what the Lord looks for at our hands; and we should suffer no excuse to have weight with us, but what we really judge will bear weight in the balance of the sanctuary.

We might notice in this place, the too great neglect of social prayer and Christian conference that takes place. We believe indeed, that in the circumstantiated case of many of our congregations, it is impracticable to have every member of them in a society for these exercises. We are in general a people scattered in the midst of many. But we can scarce be at a loss to find a number of persons, who may have conveniency to assemble themselves together, and who nevertheless pay no attention to this duty. Such persons are guilty of neglecting an institution that has the stamp of God's authority, as much as any other, has the promise of his presence annexed to it, and has been a great blessing unto many. When his people have been employed in conversing about religion, he has surprised them with a manifestation of himself. Witness the disciples going to Emmaus. *While they talked of the things that had happened, Jesus himself drew nigh, and went with them.* And we reckon, that when religion is thriving among a people, the *fearers of the Lord* will *speak often one to another.*

We might have noticed here also, the neglect of family fasting and thanksgiving which many are chargeable with, contrary to the Lord's word, *They shall*

shall mourn every family apart. But on these things we insist not. We should all be careful to reflect how far we are chargeable with these and such like omissions; and as they are all *sins against the Lord our God*, we should pray for a discovery of our guilt in them, for the pardon of them, and for grace to make conscience of performing these duties in time coming.

6. The scandals breaking out among us from time to time are sins against the Lord our God; and especially when the scandalous persons are either fugitives from discipline, or are careless about having their scandals seasonably purged according to the prescribed order. As we have our secret faults, which cannot properly be brought forth as grounds of church discipline, we have our presumptuous or public sins also. It is a mercy, and we ought to speak it with humility, that these are not perhaps so frequent among us, as among some others: But they happen too often, to the opening of the mouths of the adversaries of the Lord's cause, and to the saddening of the hearts of the friends of it.

And it is a circumstance that adds much to the guilt of them, that very often the persons chargeable, are backward to confess their faults, and submit to the discipline of the Lord's house. There are but few who offer themselves for discipline, till they be called to do so. Many will lie by as long as possible. Is it not a very common custom with them, to take no thought about having their scandals purged, till about the time of a sacrament? They quietly keep back till they stand in need of sealing ordinances, or till an opportunity of that kind be approaching. Little do such persons think, that the wound they

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give to the cause of religion by their scandalous conduct, is still to be considered as bleeding, till the scandal be purged, as God has appointed. And though we would wish to speak with all charity and caution, yet we cannot help saying, that when a scandalous person can unnecessarily delay his submission to censure, it is a presumption of a seared conscience, and that neither his sin, nor the scandal of it, has been matter of right exercise to him. Persons are too ready indeed to be kept back from giving satisfactory evidence to the church of their sorrow for their sin, by submitting to discipline, from a notion, that to do so is shameful. But they should consider, that to lie under scandal, is a much greater disgrace. That they have sinned against God, and made themselves scandalous in the eye of the church, is what they cannot reflect upon with too much shame and blushing. But we do not think, that to submit to discipline is a person's disgrace, but his honour; as it is an evidence of the sense he has of his guilt, and of his respect to the ordinance of Christ.

7. The decay of brotherly love and affection is a sin with us against the Lord our God. We would not be understood, as if we imagined that this is universal among us. But it is too much the case. There is no duty more frequently recommended by Christ and his apostles than love. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. Let brotherly love continue. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. Though others may bite and devour one another, the people of God should live in love and harmony.*

Yet

Yet in how many instances has the love of the Lord's people to one another *waxed cold*? It has so to such a degree, that those who do not wish ~~there~~ or their profession well, have got it as a sort of proverb, "They cannot agree among themselves, how can they agree with others?" This is rather a pitiful and ill-natured insinuation, than a well-grounded charge: because, although private feuds may take place between individuals, it is unreasonable to charge the whole body as enemies to love and peace.

Yet it is very dishonourable to God, and injurious to the interests of religion, that we live in brotherly love so little. There is a wonderful starchness among professors in general. Their hearts do not warm to each other. It is *not with them as in months past*, when they shone in that *love, that suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, nor is puffed up; that doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil*. Very much do these things prevail, which the Apostle Peter exhorts to *lay aside*, 1 Pet. ii. 1. *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings*. What a fire of contention and strife will even a very trifling spark kindle? How soon are the hearts of many professors set in opposition to each other? And how difficult is it to persuade them to drop their mutual jealousies and contentions? So far from forgiving their brother *till seventy times seven*, they can scarce be prevailed upon to do it *for once*. We might be at a loss to account for this, or even to believe it, did not the Spirit of God tell us in the word, that a *brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city*.

Yet

city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle, Prov. xviii. 19.

We ought to reflect, that while we cherish strife, and retain envy and hatred in our minds, it is impossible that religion can prosper among us. A person, who is growing in grace, and advancing in his spiritual stature, will desire that this may be the case with others, and contribute his endeavour, by mutual advice and example, to promote that end. But how can he do this, if he hate his brother, or if his love to him hath *waxed cold*? We should therefore attend to the wise counsel of the Lord, 1 John iv. 7, 8. *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God: and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*

8. Untenderness of walk and conversation is a sin with many of us against the Lord our God. There are too many who have scarce any thing of what constitutes the character of Christ's witnesses about them, but the name. Though the Lord's people should be *an holy people*, yet how little is true holiness to be found? The most that takes place is only (if I may use the phrase) *a negative holiness*; that is, they are not openly immoral, profane, and scandalous. But how little are they disposed for holy exercises, and a holy conversation? How seldom employed in conversing about Christ, and divine things? How much do the things of this world, and, perhaps, trifling amusements and diversions, engross their attention, and form the subject of their talk on almost every occasion? This is inconsistent with the description given of the righteous man, in Psal. xxxvii. 30, 31. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom,*

and

and his tongue talketh of judgment. And the reason or spring of this is mentioned in these words, *The law of God is in his heart*. If the law of God, or the great things contained in it, had suitable entertainment from us, and were the subjects of our meditation as often as they ought to be, our discourse would not be so habitually carnal and trifling as it is.

Many things take place in the behaviour of professors, which are hurtful to religion, although no public scandal can well be got fixed upon them, so as to bring them under church discipline: such as the unnecessary frequenting of carnal company, and, perhaps, despising the society of their Christian friends. Many appear among us, on the Lord's day, in public ordinances, who love quite other company the rest of the week. They attend on Sabbath in the same worshipping assembly with fellow Christians, but the careless, the carnal, and the worldly, are *the men of their counsel* on other days. They would reckon it irksome and tedious, to spend an hour in social prayer and conference with fellow communicants, but a number of hours spent in a tippling house, among carnal and irreligious men, slide away with great ease. O how opposite is this to the spirit and disposition of the King of Israel, who would not sit with vain persons, nor go in with dissemblers, but was, on the contrary, a companion of all them that feared the Lord! *The saints on the earth* were his excellent and choice companions, and in them was his delight.

In a word, close walking with God is very rare, or, whence is the idle and vain talk, and the unguarded conduct, which many are chargeable with? How little do we study to behave as *the sons of God*,
without

without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, and to make our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven? Wit out this we need not expect men to regard our profession. Let it be never so pure and scriptural, if our walk and behaviour be of a piece with their own, and not guarded and heavenly, as it ought to be, they will reckon us only villains in disguise. They will judge that our profession, however much we may seem to think of it, is no better than their own, since it appears to have no more influence upon our lives than theirs has. Thus the good ways of the Lord come to be spoken evil of by our means; and, therefore, an untender walk and conversation is a grievous sin against the Lord our God.

A few inferences shall conclude this discourse.

I. We may learn, that we cannot be truly affected with the sins of others, unless we are convinced of, and humbled for, our own sins. It is a solemn mocking of God, to make a great noise about the sins of the church and land, in which we dwell, and expatiate largely upon the iniquities of the present and former generations, while we are silent about our own provocations. This is to discern the *motes* in the eyes of others, without seeing the *beams* in our own. That we ought to pity and pray for a backsliding and incorrigible people, and to lament that the name and law of Christ are so much trampled upon by them, is evidently our duty. But we are not to do this, in the way of *wiping our mouths*, like the adulterers, and saying, *We have done no wickedness.*

Right

Right humiliation before God finds its cause first at home. It begins with the person himself, and makes him to acknowledge that he is *the chief of sinners, and more brutish than any man*. So long as we remain blind and unconcerned about our own iniquities, it is impossible that we can be really sorry for the sins of others. If we would, therefore, be worthy of the name of *the mourners in Zion*, let us be first calling to remembrance our own transgressions, surveying them in all their aggravations, and confessing them before God, with our eyes turned to *the propitiation for sin*. For this we have the example of all right penitents in the word of God. When the church was excited to the exercise of mourning and humiliation, on account of a grievous famine which was brought upon the land, in her confession of sin, she takes notice of that of the present generation, before that of the former, Jer. xiv. 20. *We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee*. When the Prophet Isaiah got a remarkable discovery of the LORD in a vision, which led him to take a view of his own vileness, and that of the people, *his own* first drew his attention, and was first mentioned in his confession, Isa. vi. 5. *Then said I, woe is me; for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: For mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts*. From these two instances we may learn, that in every acceptable confession of sin, our own iniquities will especially affect us. If our exercise be right to-day, each of us will be saying, as the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner*.

2. Learn,

Right

2. Learn, that the outward dispensations of God towards a people may be favourable, while yet he has just ground of quarrel with them. He had, on the occasion which our text refers to, granted the Israelites a victory over their brethren of Judah. Yet here their guiltiness before him is declared in a very expressive and strong manner. *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* The observation applies to us. God's kindness to us, as a church, hath been, and still is, very great. He hath maintained his ordinances among us in purity, and gives us outward peace and liberty to enjoy them. But alas, has he not just ground of quarrel against us? And if we rightly discern the state of things among us, we will perceive that he is pleading this quarrel. For, although we have his ordinances, yet how little of his gracious presence is enjoyed in them, in comparison of what hath been experienced by his people formerly? He hath *withdrawn himself, and is gone*. The heavenly rain doth not *fill the pools*, as in former days, and, hence, the *fat land is turned into barrenness, for the sins of those that dwell therein*.

3. Learn, that one reason of our not suspecting ourselves to be guilty of many sins against the Lord, is our not inquiring about them. The men of Israel, it would appear, did not suspect that they were remarkably guilty before God. But the prophet, by interrogating them so sharply, meant, that they should examine their own consciences, and let these decide in the matter. *Are there not with you—sins against the Lord?* When once they began seriously to make the inquiry at themselves, they, doubtless, would

would be laid under a necessity of answering the question in the affirmative.

This will also be found to be one cause of a great mistake among us, in that we are so ready to talk a great deal about the sins of others, and to be very close-mouthed about our own. It is very natural for men to perceive with acuteness the faults and and foibles of others, while they will not see the same, or worse, in themselves. Let us turn our eyes towards ourselves. Let us obey the voice of God to this purpose: *Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.* Let us put in practice the resolution of the church; *Let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.* Let us bring our conduct, as individuals, as a religious society, to the bar of God's word, and examine impartially how far it agrees or does not agree with it. Let us compare our practice with our profession, and see whether they correspond, or whether they give each other the lie. And, doubtless, we will be very partial in our own favours, if we find not reason sufficient to say, *With us, even with us, are sins against the Lord our God.*

4. Hence see, matter of exhortation.

1st, Seek a discovery of your own sins. God only can give you a proper knowledge of them. Under an apprehension of the great number, and heinous nature of them, you should pray, after the example of Job, chap. xiii. 23. *How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression, and my sin.* It is a promising symptom, in the case of a person or people, when the Lord shews them their guilt and vileness, and keeps these in their eye. David's having his *sin* ever before him, was an evidence that it was blotted out of God's sight.

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2dly, Seek to be brought to a proper concern on account of your sins. You must not be satisfied with a general notion of what they are; but must pray to have your consciences impressed with the awful guilt of them. Your eye must affect your heart. Seek a discovery of the dishonour done to God by your sins, in consequence of the distinguished profession which you make. If you get a right view of them, you will be convinced, that after all your essays at mourning over them before the Lord, you have never yet been so exercised about them as you ought to have been. Nothing will occasion more sorrow to a man of a tender conscience, than the sins of a professing people, because these have a long train of aggravations attending them, which the sins of others have not. Jeremiah has been sometimes stiled the *weeping prophet*; but we find him speaking as if he thought that he had not wept enough. Hence he says, *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*

3dly, Seek the pardon of all your sins. This God hath promised to bestow, and his promise affords us encouragement to ask it. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.* Say in the words of David, *For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.* Plead for the pardon of sin, upon the ground of the propitiatory sacrifice which Christ offered up. This is a never-failing argument at the throne of God. And it is only in the faith of pardoning mercy, that you will be truly sorrowful for sin, and truly sincere and explicit in confessing it before the Lord,

4thly,

4thly, Seek grace to guard you against persevering in those sins with which you stand chargeable before the Lord your God. If our sorrow be of an evangelical kind, it will issue in turning from sin to God. The legalist sins and repents, and again he greedily rushes on the commission of those sins which he professed to repent of. He imagines himself able to abstain from sin at his pleasure, and makes all his resolutions against it in his own strength. Sin, therefore, has an easy victory over him. But, if you be true mourners on account of the iniquities which testify against you, you will be committing yourselves to the Lord, that, by his grace, he may preserve you from them. You will resolve against them in the strength of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Consider that this is your duty. All your professed humiliation for sin is vain, if you do not give up with it. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper : but whoso confesseth, and forsaketh them, shall have mercy. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me ; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

S E R M O N XII.

THE SAFEST COURSE IN EVIL DAYS.

PSALM lvii. 2.

—*In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

WHEN the judgments of God are in the earth, it becomes the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished. We have much sin prevailing with us, and we belong to a sinful and perverse generation. The Lord has been long smiting us with many spiritual judgments, beside considerable temporal ones; and he seems, at present, to be threatening to overwhelm us with still more sensible and dreadful calamities. We should be studying preparation for such times. *Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* If we would be truly safe in such a time, we should be taking the course which the Psalmist exemplifieth in the words before us.

The title of this psalm informs us, that it was composed by David, when he was under persecution from Saul. It sets before us the strong confidence which the Psalmist had in God, in a time of great danger.

danger. He had indeed remarkable occasion to observe the Lord's goodness and care about him, in his many wonderful escapes from that deceitful and blood-thirsty man. And all these deliverances he improved, for strengthening his faith and trust in God. *If the Lord had not been upon his side, surely men would have swallowed him up, when their wrath was kindled against him.*

He begins the psalm with a prayer for divine mercy, which is earnestly repeated. *Be merciful unto me, O God; be merciful unto me.* He had no mercy to expect at the hands of his enemies, for he knew that *the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* But he knew that the Lord is a merciful God. He had formerly *tasted that he is gracious.* And the mercy of the Lord was an inexhaustible source of consolation to him, when his enemies were both powerful and malicious. *He trusted in God's mercy, and his heart rejoiced in his salvation.* *Be merciful unto me,* says he, *for my soul trusteth in thee.* It is God as a God of mercy only, who is, or can be, a proper object of trust and confidence to a sinner. A discovery of him as a God of pardoning mercy excites the soul to the exercise of faith in him. Nor shall the person, who trusts in God's mercy through Christ, ever be ashamed or disappointed. *They that trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion, which cannot be moved.*

In the words before us, the Psalmist declares what would be his exercise, and where he would still have recourse for safety in dangerous times. He *had trusted in the Lord*, and he had found it a safe and pleasant exercise. He would, therefore, persevere in it. *Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

The present time was a time of calamity and trouble to David, which we find him describing in the following part of the psalm. It was a time of calamity to the nation of Israel in general, in many respects. They were under tokens of God's displeasure, in the internal commotions and schisms which were taking place among them, as well as in the attacks made upon them by foreign enemies, in Saul's time.—But David believed that these *calamities* would *overpass*; and he would, in the meantime, *make his refuge in the shadow of* JEHOVAH's wings. The mode of expression evidently refers to the young and tender chickens running for safety under the wings of their dam, at the approach of danger. David knew that his only safety lay in the divine protection. He took God himself as *his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*.

This is the course which the Lord's people are still to take, in every time of calamity, whether private, or more public. Under all their personal and private troubles, they find safety and consolation in God,—safety from the curse, and from all the penal evil which is naturally in every adverse dispensation. The belief of his favour and love, makes their trials light and sweet, and his faithfulness secures deliverance from them, and victory over them, in due time.

The same course we should all be taking in a time of public calamity, when many judgments are lying on the generation, and when additional calamities are threatened, impending, and, as it were, at the very door. The true Christian can behold these, in the exercise of faith, without slavish fear, or distraction, and can sing, as David did, *Yea, in the shadow*

of

of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. What we propose, in discoursing further upon this subject, is,

- I. To observe some things with respect to times of public calamity.
- II. To consider where the people of God make their refuge in such times; and then to add a few inferences.—We are

I. To observe some things with respect to times of public calamity.

1. They are times of great sinning. Judgments are not brought upon nations, but in consequence of God's being highly provoked by their iniquities. Hence the day of calamity is called *the day of provocation*. Psal. xcv. 8. God is provoked, and laid under the necessity of testifying his displeasure against a sinning people, especially when they are guilty of *hardening their hearts* and persevering in their sinful courses. This is always to be supposed as the procuring cause of outward calamities. By these the Lord is pleading a controversy, of which the wickedness of a nation is the just ground. The consequence of this is, that, in the most terrible appearances which God makes as *the God of judgement*, a nation may read its own sin. Micah i. 3—5. *Behold the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the vallies shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel.*

Men

Men often look upon sin with indifference, but it is impossible that God can do so. He is *of purer eyes than to behold evil*. It is a violation of his law, which is *holy, just, and good*. The justice and holiness of his nature necessarily require, that he should state a quarrel on that ground. And, accordingly, public judgments and calamities never take place, but where the sins of a people have paved the way for them. The waters of the flood were not poured out upon the earth, until God *saw that the wickedness of man was great*. The dreadful destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was not brought on, till *the cry* of their atrocious wickedness *reached up to heaven*. The destruction of Jerusalem followed upon her *filling up the measure* of her sin.

That the present time, as well as times past, is remarkable for the *abounding of iniquity*, is so notorious to every serious observer, as to need no proof. What a multitude of iniquity is to be found with us, on account of which God hath partly dealt with us already, and may yet deal further with us, as with Israel of old! Jer. xxx. 14. *I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased*. Apostasy from the purity of reformation formerly attained unto,—the most flagrant breaches of solemn vows,—prevailing error, immorality, profaneness, and infidelity,—contempt of God's ordinances,—and spiritual barrenness under them,—characterise the present age. When these evils are found taking place in a land, which God formerly owned as his beloved land, in a very singular manner, they must exceedingly provoke the eyes of

of his glory. Sin is greatly aggravated, and God is more dishonoured there, than in other parts of the world that never enjoyed such distinguishing tokens of his favour. And hence IMMANUEL'S land, when sin abounds in it, is, in a particular manner threatened with judgments. Isa. viii. 8. *Behold, the LORD bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck: and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O IMMANUEL.* With this compare Amos iii. 1, 2. *Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

2. Times of calamity are times of divine anger. They are called *the day of indignation*. Ezek. xxii. 24. *Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.* By public calamities God marches through a land in indignation, as the expression is, Hab. iii. 12. This is the heaviest and most dreadful ingredient in public judgments, as well as in private afflictions. Both a person, and a people, may sometimes have troubles appointed unto them, for their correction, and for the trial of their faith and patience. God sees it needful that they should be in heaviness, through manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith, which is more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. But when wickedness

is prevalent in a land, God is provoked to bring calamities upon it, as the effect of his just displeasure and wrath. And this wrath is sometimes *on all the multitude thereof*,—on all ranks and degrees of men. Ezek. vii. 12. *The time is come, the day draweth near; let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.* In like manner we read of *the generation of his wrath*, Jer. vii. 29. How inconceivably dreadful and dangerous is the state of that generation! If they be apprehensive of no evil, it is so much the worse; for *when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.* It is dreadful to think, that the God of heaven is looking down on a people with an eye of indignation! If his *loving-kindness is better than life*, his wrath must be worse than death. *Who knoweth the power of his anger?* It appears infinitely terrible, when we consider who he is, and who the objects of it are. He is the infinite JEHOVAH, and they are sinners of mankind, impotent, and absolutely incapable of resisting him. The boldest, the most daring, and most powerful, are as nothing before him. *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Thou, even thou, art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?* Psal. lxxvi. 6, 7. His wrath is not at all removed from sinners continuing in sin, even when he may be bestowing many external benefits upon them in the course of his providence. The incorrigible sinner, and an incorrigible generation, are constantly in a state of wrath, however God may outwardly deal with them. *God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death.*

The

The wrath of the Lord of hosts must infallibly take effect against a sinning person and people, if they turn not to him by evangelical repentance and reformation. It is impossible in any other way to escape his righteous judgment. *Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.* Judgment may be long delayed, but will overtake the sinners in Zion at last. Eccl. viii. 12, 13. *Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know—that it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.*

3. That the calamities brought upon a sinful nation are sometimes very various. David speaks here of *calamities*, denoting numerous distressing judgments or afflictions. As the sins of a land are multiplied against God, he multiplies the tokens and effects of his displeasure. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* There are judgments, both of a temporal and spiritual kind, with which the Lord visits a degenerate and backsliding people. He takes away his Holy Spirit from his ordinances, in a great degree; so that those ordinances, which are the appointed means of conversion and true reformation in a land, fail of their effect. Multitudes experience no saving benefit by them. Instead of being *converted and healed*, they are *bewed by the prophets, and slain by the words of God's mouth*. Many are left to despise divine institutions, and to think it below them to attend upon them. The Lord permits a spirit of error to prevail. *A lying spirit* is put into the mouth of the prophets, so that they *prophecy lies*, and disseminate the most dangerous and destructive errors, instead of the gospel of Christ: while, on the other hand,

strong

Strong delusion is sent upon many, that they are left to *believe lies*, and to *follow their pernicious ways*. A spirit of infidelity and profaneness is permitted to make great havock, and to carry many away to their eternal destruction. Instead of people taking thought about sin, and turning from it to God, they are left to be impenitent and obstinate, in defiance of reproofs both by word and providence, like these mentioned in Jer. v. 3. *O LORD, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.* It is a great judgment, when men are given up to stupidity and security at a time in which calamities are threatened and impending. It is no less dreadful, when they are only awake to outward and temporal danger, but continue fast asleep, in a state of utter carelessness about prevailing iniquities, which are the causes thereof. These things belong, both to the sin, and to the punishment of a people. They are judicially given up of God *to the ways of their own hearts, and to walk in their own counsels.* And this makes a time calamitous indeed.

There are also various temporal judgments, by which God manifests his displeasure, and inflicts his wrath upon a sinning land. *The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.* He threatens, and often punisheth, as he did that people, Jer. xiv. 10. *When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.* He puts forth his hand upon their substance, their trade, and their credit.

He

He sometimes mingles a perverse spirit in the midst of them, kindles the fire of dissension and war among them, and makes them fall down every man by the hand of his brother. For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. Isa. ix. 18, 19.

4. Times of calamity are times of danger. So much is implied in David's resolution here. He saw that there was danger, and therefore says, *In the shadow of thy wings I will make my refuge.* There is a holy and dutiful fear necessary, when the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of a land for their iniquity. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, saith the Psalmist, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* We are indeed to beware of a fear of judgments, without the fear of God. Many will be greatly alarmed at the prospect of judgments and calamities, which affect either their natural life or property, who have no fear of a holy God in their hearts, nor are afraid of sin, which is the true cause of all their miseries. *They roar like bears, when their externals are touched, but they do not mourn like doves of the vallies, every one for his iniquity.*

We are also to beware of that fear which flows from a distrust of God, as if he were not able to preserve us, and to order all things, even in perilous times, for our good. But we are to exercise a fear, arising from a view of God's majesty, as offended against sin, and from real grief on account of these iniquities and abominations, which have provoked him to

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anger. A fear of self-diffidence and watchfulness becomes us, lest *the day* of calamity *come upon us un-awares*, and lest we be carried out of God's way by any of the perils attendant on such a day. There is a danger of falling into a secure and careless frame of heart. This is one of the spiritual plagues, which are poured out upon a sinning people, as we mentioned above. We should beware of being secure, as if we were innocent, and had no hand in *the provocation*. *With us, even with us, are sins against the Lord our God*. On the other hand, there is a danger of fainting, of giving way to despondency, and an undutiful and slavish fear. Prov. xxiv. 10. *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small*. We are to prevent fainting, by aiming at the exercise of faith in God, as our God, and our refuge. *I had fainted*, says David, *unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*. In another psalm he says, *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*. In a time of great outward calamity, such as when God is prosecuting his quarrel against a sinning people, by the sword, or the famine, or the pestilence, there is a common danger that all are exposed unto. There is no security for our being safe then, whatever means we may use, if we are not, above all, taking David's method of safety, by making God our refuge.

5. Times of calamity are to be looked for, in the Lord's progress toward the restoration and enlargement of his church. We are not to expect the rebuilding of Zion, but through a train of terrible judgments on the nations of this world. We do not say, that these calamitous dispensations are to be the proper and effectual means of accomplishing
 God's

God's gracious purposes respecting his church. This will be done by the spiritual means of his own appointment, attended with supernatural and gracious efficacy. But we say, that this great and glorious change, as to the state of the church of Christ, will be introduced by days of heavy judgment and calamity. This is agreeable to God's usual method of appearing to render his own work in Zion prosperous. Psa. lxxvi. 8, 9. *Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth.* Before he proceed to revive his work, he has the works of darkness, the works of sin and the devil, to destroy. Men evidence their enmity against him, by opposing his interests in the church, or, by supporting antichristian errors, abominations, and idolatries, contrary to the real welfare of his spiritual kingdom. The Lord has this opposition to level, and it is ordinarily done by a course of temporal judgments. This might be shewn, by many Scripture testimonies, to be the method which he hath formerly taken, and which he is yet to take. He warned the disciples of it, and he is, by the same words, still warning us. Luke xxi. 25,—28. *There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh.* Verse 31. *When*

ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. In Jer. xxx. 18, 19, 20. there is a gracious promise about the restoration of the church. *Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places: and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.* See, in verse 23, 24. how the accomplishment of this gracious promise is to be introduced. *Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he hath done it, and until he hath performed the intents of his heart.* And, lest we should think that the passage only refers to former times, and not to ours, it is added, *In the latter days ye shall consider it.* In the book of the Revelation, we are expressly taught, that the complete and final downfall of Antichrist will be attended with terrible calamities on all the interests of his votaries,—on all who aid and support him; as may be seen particularly from chap. xviii. and xix. So it is evident, that times of calamity are still to be looked for, as truly as we are to expect the Lord to appear graciously, for restoring his interests in the church, and making her *a praise in the earth.*

6. That times of calamity will come to an end. The Psalmist believed that they would *pass over*. This is also intimated in the warning which God gives to his people in Isa. xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.* To God's inveterate and irreconcilable enemies, a day of public calamity will be only *the beginning of sorrows*. They may be driven away in their wickedness, by the stroke of his righteous judgment, into a state of everlasting woe, where *the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*. But the church and people of God have always reason to expect, that the forest and longest day of the pleading of God's controversy will have an end. Times of calamity may be longer, or shorter, just as God, in his sovereignty, is pleased to appoint, and as he sees it to be necessary. Sometimes there is reason to say, as the angel of the LORD, *O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these three score and ten years?* At other times the storm soon blows over. But, at any rate, the day of calamity will pass away, whenever the Lord's end by it is gained. It will be said, as to the ancient church, Zeph. iii. 14, 15. *Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad, and rejoice with all thine heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy.* From love to his own people, God will shorten evil days, and bring them to an end. On this account, the faints are a general blessing to a land, while the Lord deals more favourably with it, for their sakes, than he would otherwise do. Hence we

find our Lord saying, Matth. xxiv. 22. *Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elects sake those days shall be shortened.*

What glorious times have the people of God to look for, when *these calamities are overpast!* What days of peace and pleasure, in the prosperous state of religion which is to succeed! When God's judgments have done their work against his antichristian enemies, we may expect the church of Christ to *look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.* For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Isa. li. 3. and lii. 9, 10. And, my brethren, when times of calamity are either coming on, or presently taking place, it becomes you, by faith and hope, to be looking forward to the joyful days which are to follow. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.* We proceed,

II. To consider where the people of God make their refuge in times of calamity. *In the shadow of thy wings, says David, will I make my refuge.*

It is God only, who can be a sufficient defence in such times. *The Lord is our defence,* said the church, and, *because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall*

shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling. It is a reconciled God in Christ, who is here to be understood, or, God at peace with the person through the mediation of Jesus. *The shadow of his wings*, is an expression which denotes, that he hath made ample provision for the safety of his people, in times of calamity. This part of the subject might be treated at great length: but we shall confine ourselves at present to the few observations following.

1. That the Lord's people are to make their refuge under the shadow of the blood and righteousness of Christ. There is no safety at any time for guilty sinners but here. The wrath of God is ever ready to burst forth against men, till they be brought under the covert of blood. You know, that the blood of the passover lamb was a defence to the Israelites in Egypt against the sword of the destroying angel. God said, *The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and, when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.* Exod. xii. 13. And says the apostle, Heb. xi. 28. *Through faith Moses kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.* This was typical of the safety which believers enjoy under the covert of Christ's blood. All who, by faith, make application of it, are spiritually and eternally safe, and enjoy peculiar confidence, even in a time of temporal danger and calamity. Though we do not say, that they are absolutely beyond sharing in outward troubles, yet they are partakers of such safety and satisfaction of mind, as make them, comparatively, happy under them. They

They enjoy perfect freedom from the guilt of sin. All their iniquities, which are the procuring cause of divine indignation, are forgiven, through the atoning blood of Jesus. *We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* Unspeakably blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Under this shadow no vindictive wrath can fall upon them. They are effectually secured against all liability to bear any portion of it. *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* The clouds of judgment and calamity, which are charged with wrath, and are ready to burst on the heads of Christless sinners, contain no drop of vindictive anger to the saints. They are delivered from all those charges which the broken law and incensed justice had to bring against them. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* Through Christ, they are become the objects of God's favour, who were formerly *the children of wrath even as others*; and they shall be raised to the full participation of that blessedness, which he hath bought for them by his blood. *In his name shall they rejoice all the day, and in his righteousness shall they be exalted.*

There is great need that all of you seek this righteousness, in a time of judgment, and especially when heavier calamities seem to be threatened. Be assured that there is no safety elsewhere. Wherefore, saith the Lord, *Seek meekness, seek righteousness, it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* Although the Lord's people may feel, and even fall by, the stroke of outward and common calamity, yet this can by no means affect their spiritual and eternal safety. Dying under the blood and righteousness of Christ,

Christ, in whatever manner, they die safely, and shall come out of all their tribulation, having their robes washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

2. The Lord's people are to make their refuge under the shadow of the divine perfections. To this purpose it is said, Psal. xci. 1, 2. 4. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. Through Christ Jesus all the perfections of JEHOVAH are engaged on the side of the believer. Even those perfections from which, in his guilty and cursed state, he had every thing to fear, are in his favour now. Justice, as well as mercy, is for him, because mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other, in the person and cross of IMMANUEL. The people of God find refuge in his love and mercy towards them. Though his wrath burns against a wicked generation, and they perish from the way, yet he beholds his people with an eye of love, and regards them with bowels of compassion. The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him: and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders. They cannot be divested of his love, or separated from the enjoyment of it, in a time of tribulation, either private or public. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril,*

ril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. They have to confide in his power in evil days, and have it engaged for their safety and protection. He is the Almighty under whose shadow they abide. The hand of his power is constantly around them; for they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. He is powerful to strengthen and to support them, when their hearts are ready to faint and fail: Fear thou not, says he to the timorous Christian, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness. He is powerful to save and preserve them alive in the day of calamity. He will be their arm every morning, and their salvation also in the time of trouble. They have his wisdom to confide in, for giving them light and direction, as to their proper duty, in dark and troublesome times. The meek will be guide in judgment; and the meek will be teach his way. By his wisdom he can so order and dispose of all events, in the most critical and dangerous times, that they shall be safe, as far as it is for his glory and for their advantage. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations. At any rate, he will prove that he is wise in heart, and mighty in strength, by overruling these very calamities to their good, which are ruinous and destructive to others. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. In fine, every perfection of God affords safety to his people. They should be considering them all, as they are displayed in and through Christ, as affording the greatest encouragement to take David's course,

in the renewed exercise of faith. *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.*

3. The promises of God's covenant afford refuge and safety to his people in times of calamity. Hence we find the saints trusting and encouraging themselves in them, during the days of public distress and tribulation, as well as of private affliction. David had experience of the consolations of God's word in his troubles, and it was his hope in the day of evil. *Remember the word unto thy servant, said he, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction. Out of the depth have I cried unto thee, O LORD. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.* Psal. cxix. 49, 50; and cxxx. 1,—5. In days of darkness and gloominess, we find the church rejoicing in a promising God. When the Lord was shewing his people hard things, and making them to drink the wine of astonishment; yet we find the godly man saying, *God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.* Psal. lx. 1.—6. The promises of pardon, peace, and acceptance with God,—of sanctification and perseverance,—of safety in death, and happiness in heaven,—afford unspeakable security and comfort to the Christian, when other mens hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth. But there are also various promises suited to the believer's condition, in days of wrath against a sinning people. The Lord hath engaged to give spiritual strength and courage to his own, to fortify and support them under the pressure of these calamities, which prove overwhelming to carnal men. So that, when the hearts of others fail, and sink within them like lead in the mighty waters,

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the Lord's people have confidence in his fear. Prov. xiv. 26. *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence : and his children shall have a place of refuge.* Isa. xxv. 4. *Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.* In the faith of this, they are enabled to overcome, and to argue themselves out of their slavish fears, saying, *Wherefore should I fear in the day of evil ?* He hath engaged to favour them with his gracious presence at all times, and, more especially, to be to them *a present help in trouble.* Therefore, because he is *at their right hand, they shall not be moved.* He encourageth them to the exercise of prayer in such times, by the promise of deliverance. *Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* Nay, it is secured by his gracious word that this shall be their exercise, and their attainment. *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him : I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him.* Psal. l. 15, and xci. 15. He hath promised them all outward support and throughbearing, as far as it is for his glory. He will see to have their common animal wants supplied. *O fear the LORD, ye his saints ; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger : but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time : and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* He hath promised them the sanctified use and improvement of all his dispensations, both toward themselves, and to the land wherein they live. *They shall get meat out of the eater, and sweet out of*

the strong. The spiritual building of mercy in their souls shall go on, *even in troublous times.* In short, it shall be well with them, whatever may take place with a guilty people, among whom they are, for the present, mingled. They shall, if not distinctly in this world, at least in the world to come, have to say, *He hath done all things well.* Surely I know, said Solomon, *that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him,* Eccl. viii. 12. When we consider that the Promiser is a God of unchangeable faithfulness, we may well confide in his promises. They are not made rashly. He is neither unable nor unwilling to *do as he hath said.* We should, therefore, study to aim at Abraham's exercise, who *staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform.* Rom. iv. 20, 21.

4. In the last place, The Lord's people, in times of calamity, are to make their refuge under the shadow of his providential care. As the arm of his grace is continually around their spiritual and eternal concerns, so the arm of his special providence is round about them, at all times. He is not only *speaking good concerning them*, but he is *doing as he hath said.* We have already observed, that he hath promised them protection from the stroke of outward calamities, as far as it is for his glory, and for their good. He provides for their safety, before he bring judgments on a land. We have this exemplified in Ezek. ix. 1,—5. The prophet, in vision, saw *six men, every man with a slaughter weapon in his hand.* They were the executioners of divine

vengeance on a guilty people. But, before they proceed to their work, *one of them*, who had a *writer's inkhorn by his side*, is ordered to go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for the abominations that are done in the midst thereof. And to the others, the LORD said, Go ye after him through the city, and smite,—but come not near any man upon whom is the mark. A similar instance of care is to be found in Rev. vii. 1,—3. In this passage of Scripture we may perceive, that neither the winds of spiritual, nor of temporal judgments, are permitted to blow, till God hath sealed his own servants. Their safety and welfare lie ever near his heart. It is not, indeed, to be expected, that God's people are to be free from trouble, or that they are absolutely to escape the stroke of common calamity. In such days, it sometimes happens that there is one event, as to the external matter and appearance of it, to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean. Not only so, but saints may fall in a time of public danger, and some finners may escape. *There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness.* But, though this may be the case in some instances, it is certain, that the weight of divine judgment shall fall chiefly upon the wicked, upon those who are without Christ, and without God in the world. They are marked out as the objects of God's indignation, and he so orders matters, in his matchless wisdom and justice, that the weight of the vengeance lights upon them. This appears from that before-cited text, Jer. xxx. 23. The same is evident from chap. xxv. 31. *The*

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Lord hath a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh; he will give THEM THAT ARE WICKED to the sword, saith the Lord. This is also confirmed from the word of God, by another prophet, Isa. xiii. 9. *Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy THE SINNERS THEREOF out of it.* On the other hand, the Lord's people have promises, that they may be safe in times of judgment, Zeph. ii. 3. *Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger.* Others have no promise,—no security whatever,—that they shall escape. But the LORD says to his own people, *it may be ye shall be hid.* The promise is not absolute, because sometimes it is for God's glory that they should fall. In that case, they glorify God more, by such a death, than if they had lived. And, surely, they themselves sustain no loss, seeing they exchange a sinful and vexatious world, for an incorruptible and eternal crown. Yet, in God's ordinary way of working, he provides for the safety of his people, and often displays his wisdom, power, and goodness, in a very glorious manner, in their preservation. They may be sure of being *hid*, if he has any gracious purpose to serve by them, until the day of calamity be *overpast*. They are, therefore, to trust in him, with meekness, and with resignation to his will, adoring his sovereignty, and confiding in his grace and love, his faithfulness and power; for, however he may order their lot, yet *all things*,—both good and bad,—shall eventually *work together for their good*.

This discourse shall be concluded with a few inferences and exhortations.

1. Here see, the sad state of wicked men in a day of calamity. They are in no place of *refuge from the storm*, and under no *covert from the tempest*. Having no saving interest in God, or in his Christ, they are exposed to all the effects of his indignation. They are in danger, not only of being swept off the earth, but of being sent *down to the pit, out of which there is no redemption*. In vain shall they attempt to flee, when God is the pursuer. *There is no darkness, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*. Their confidence and hope of safety, in human means of aid and defence, will prove to be groundless. *The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost*. Powerful fleets, and numerous armies, are no defence to a wicked people against *the wrath of the Lord of hosts*. When *the decree brings forth, and the day of the Lord's anger comes upon them*, that *curse* will be found verified in a most undeniable manner, Jer. xvii. 5. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*. See Rev. vi. 12.—17.

2. Learn, that the people of God should not give way to slavish fear and despondency in days of calamity. They are a pardoned, and an accepted people, and, therefore, they are near and dear unto the Lord. They have an all-sufficient refuge ever at hand. *The God-man is an biding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. Though you cannot expect, Christian, to have no share in common troubles, yet
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you are completely fortified against wrath. God's anger is turned away from you. Under the shadow of his wings, you shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. If it be consistent with his sovereign will, and be for your real good, he can preserve you alive, when *thousands are falling at your side, and ten thousands at your right hand*. Though you should have to wade through the deep waters, and to walk through the fires, yet the one *shall not overflow thee*, nor the flames of the other *kindle upon thee*, Isa. xliii. 2. There is nothing wrathful in any of his dispensations toward you. That which to the wicked is *the wound of an enemy*, is to you only the rod of your heavenly Father. Should he even take you away with his stroke, the change will be so blessed, and so sudden, that you will not be disposed, although you had time, to complain. Your body shall lie down in the grave, *where the wicked cease from trouble, and the weary are at rest*, and your soul shall enter into his blissful presence, where sin and sorrow, pain and death, can have no place.

3. Hence see, that the church's seed shall be preserved in the midst of the most dreadful calamities. We may apply here the words of the wisest of men, Prov. xii. 7. *The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand*. When God shakes the earth by awful and alarming providences, his design is to *shake the wicked out of it*. But, in the course of the most desolating judgments, he will take care to have a remnant saved. Isa. vi. 11, 12, 13. The prophet said, *Lord, how long?* How long shall thine anger last? And the LORD answered, *Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without men, and the land*

be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten; as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof. When calamities have passed over, and when God's work by them is done, the holy seed will be found to have been safe under the shadow of his wings. Let us not fear that God will utterly slay the righteous with the wicked. Jer. xxx. 10, 11. Fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord, neither be dismayed, O Israel; for I am with thee, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee. The children of his servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before him, Psal. cii. 28.

We exhort you all, to stand in awe of God's displeasure against sin, as manifested, both in the threatenings of his word, and in the dispensations of his providence. Of all the dismal signs of our times, this is none of the least, that, whatever fear of man prevails, the greater part seem to be no way apprehensive of Divine anger. Let us see, from his word, how he hath formerly dealt with sinning nations, though they were called by his name, and let us fear before him. *Go ye now unto my place, which was in Shiloh, says he, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel.*—Study to understand, and to be affected with, the grounds of all these calamities, with which we are either visited or threatened. Alas, that so little attention is paid to these! *Our iniquities have separated between*

us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us. Our hands are defiled with blood, and our fingers with iniquity; our lips have spoken lies, our tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies: they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Isa. lix. 2, 3, 4. Were not our land defiled with sin, we would have nothing to fear. God would not be our enemy, but our friend. But, when there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land,—when by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood,—can we justly expect that the Lord should not have a controversy with the inhabitants of the land? Surely not. Hos. iv. 1, 2. O that my countrymen would believe me! when I say, that these, and other prevailing parts of wickedness, are more to be dreaded, than the intentions of the most powerful foe. Our worst enemies are the men of our own island. Our avowed or secret infidels, our profane wits, our contemners of God's ordinances, and profaners of his Sabbaths, our swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, and adulterers, with the other tribes of unholy men, are the greatest enemies to their king and country. Were not our land so much peopled with these men, we would have little to fear from the most merciless and powerful enemies, who might threaten to invade us. Nay, we would not be threatened at all. The LORD would make even our enemies to be at peace with us.—Let us, therefore, *be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let our laughter be turned to mourning, and our joy to heaviness; let us humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord,*

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on account of all our iniquities, which are the true causes of God's anger, and of our felt calamities, and impending dangers. Our way and our doings have procured these things unto us.—Flee, out of the way of wrath, under the shadow of JEHOVAH'S wings. A reconciled God in Christ is our defence. He is addressing you in the words of the prophet, Isa. xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the LORD cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*—Let the Lord's people study to possess their souls in patience, and to rejoice in the safety provided for them, in the everlasting covenant, in the blood of IMMANUEL, in God's promises, and in God himself. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.*—Let them comfort themselves in this, that calamities will pass over, as to the church and people of God, and that there will be glorious days following them. In the mean time, adopt and practise David's resolution here: *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

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S E R M O N XIII.

JESUS CHRIST ENTERED INTO HEAVEN BY
HIS OWN BLOOD *.

HEBREWS ix. 12.

—*By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place.*

OUR Lord Jesus Christ was once in this world in our nature. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* He was then employed in a work of the last importance,—a work by which he was to glorify God, and to secure everlasting salvation to sinful men. He had to fulfil the whole law, in a life of holy obedience, and also to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity. This could only be done by the shedding of blood unto death; for *without shedding of blood is no remission.* Christ, therefore, came to have *his precious blood shed*, and to *pour out his soul unto death*, as an atoning sacrifice in the room of sinners. This work he finished, and brought to a glorious and successful issue; and his doing so is worthy of being held

* This Sermon was preached at Dalkeith, January 28. 1798, immediately before the dispensation of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

held in everlasting remembrance. We are to-day assembled for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which is an ordinance expressly appointed, in commemoration of the work which our *great High Priest* finished upon the cross. And we have reason to be employed in this, with holy joy and confidence, considering that *the Lord is risen indeed*, that he *hath ascended up on high*, and hath carried his blood within the vail. This is an incontestible proof, that it is of infinite value,—fully adequate to all the great and glorious purposes for which it was shed.

The apostle's design, in the greater part of this epistle, is to shew that the Old Testament priesthood and service had a relation to the priesthood and service of Christ, as the type unto the antitype; and to point out the infinite excellency of the latter, in comparison of the former.—In the first five verses of this chapter, he describes the two principal apartments in the ancient tabernacle,—*the holy*, and *the most holy place*,—and mentions various parts of the furniture belonging to these.—In verses 6. and 7. he observes, that the ordinary priests entered into the first of these daily, *accomplishing the service* which God commanded; *but into the second went the high priest alone once every year*. None but the high priest was to enter into *the holiest of all*, and even he was not to enter at all times, nor, indeed, at any other time, but once a year, on the day of atonement, Lev. xvi. In this respect he was a more eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ, than the ordinary priests were; as his entering into the most holy place was typical of our Lord's entering into heaven, after having officiated as a sacrificing Priest upon earth.

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From the 8th to the 10th verse, the apostle points out the imperfection of all the Old Testament services, and shews that they were all ineffectual, in themselves considered, for procuring or conferring spiritual blessings. They could not purge or pacify a guilty conscience, could not procure peace and acceptance with God, nor open up a way to heaven, by any intrinsic merit which they could be supposed to have. They served only *as figures* or types *for the time then present*; but the spiritual blessings, which Old Testament believers enjoyed, were not from any merit or efficacy belonging to these carnal ordinances, but from Him who was to come, as the glorious antitype and substance of all these shadows.

Accordingly, from verse 11. to the close of the chapter, the apostle illustrates the superiority, pre-eminence, and excellency of Christ's person, priesthood, and service, above all those belonging to the legal dispensation. *But Christ*, says he, *being come an High Priest of good things to come*. Christ came, and he came *an High Priest*. He appeared clothed and invested with that office. He was born *a Priest*, as well as *a King*; and one special end of his coming in human nature, was to *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*.—He was an *High Priest of good things to come*. The priests under the law, and all the multitude of sacrifices offered by them, could not purchase for, or confer upon, the worshippers, any thing spiritually good. But Christ was *an High Priest of good things to come*, because, by his meritorious sacrifice, he would make a purchase of all spiritual and heavenly blessings for his people; which blessings would be more clearly and plainly revealed, and more largely and extensively conferred, under the new,
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than under the old and typical dispensation.—He is also said to be *come an High Priest—by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building*. By this tabernacle we are to understand our Lord's human nature, in which he is said to have *tabernacled among us*, John i. 14. In the *flesh*, or human nature, he *dwelt among us*, as in a tabernacle. Our Lord himself calls his body a *temple*, John ii. 19. 21. *Jesus said, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the temple of his body*. His entering into this tabernacle, or, his assuming of our nature, was as necessary to his officiating as our great High Priest, as that the priests of old should perform the service of God in his own appointed tabernacle. And, as the high-priest passed into the most holy through the sanctuary, or, what the apostle calls, *the first tabernacle*, verse 2. so our Lord, in order to his entering into the most holy place above, had first to assume our nature, that in it he might officiate, as in a tabernacle, upon the earth.—This was *a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, not of this building*. It was far superior to the worldly sanctuary in dignity and excellency. It was *not made with hands, nor built in any common or ordinary way*. It was a tabernacle of divine construction. *A body hast thou prepared me*. There never was any thing like it in the world. It was not formed in the way that mens earthly tabernacles are ; but, in the womb of a virgin, by the immediate power and agency of the Holy Ghost.

In the words of the text, the apostle sets forth the vast superiority and excellency of our great High Priest over all the types, in respect of his glorious en-

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trance into heaven, upon finishing his work on earth. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place.*—We may observe,

1. What Christ did. *He entered in once into the holy place.* We have already seen, from what the apostle says in verse 7. that the high priest, under the law, entered annually into the holy of holies, within the second vail, on the great day of atonement, a particular account of which you will find in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. As all the prescribed usages under the law were typical of something spiritual, and vastly more important than themselves, so this typified the entrance of our Lord into the heavenly state, when his work on earth was finished. The most holy place, in the ancient tabernacle, was a type of heaven, which is therefore here, and elsewhere in this book, called *the holy place*. It proves the superior dignity of Christ's person and priesthood, that he did not enter into any place of mere ceremonial purity or holiness, but into the place typified,—even *into heaven itself*, the seat of God's more immediate, glorious, and blissful presence, and which is called *that high and holy place*, where *He dwells*. That this is the holy place here meant is evident from verse 24.—Into this Christ is said to have entered *once*. Here again is stated a great difference between him and the typical high priest. This last entered *often*. Though he durst not enter oftener than *once in one year*, yet it was a necessary and commanded duty to enter *once every year*; so that he entered *often* in a succession of years. This proved, beyond all doubt, the imperfection, weakness, and unprofitableness of the typical priesthood and sa-

crisices, for making any real atonement for sin, or procuring peace with God. The blood, which was carried within the vail, could not take away sin, and therefore more blood must be shed, and carried in there, on the annual return of the day of atonement. The priest must again put on the holy garments, must again take fire, and incense, and blood, and enter into the holy place. But Christ entered *once* only. His sacrifice was perfectly such as was required. It was of infinite value and efficacy. In it God *smelled a sweet savour*,—a savour of rest,—and in it his justice rested, having no further satisfaction to demand from the great Surety of the New Covenant.—He *entered once into the holy place*, not to return again to this world to renew his sacrificing work, having finished it to perfection; for *by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*.—We may observe,

2. How Christ entered into the holy place. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood*. The apostle observes, ver. 7. that the high priest entered into the most holy place, *not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people*. He durst not enter *without* it, to intimate, that there is no gracious access to God, nor acceptance before him, without a satisfaction for sin. Though the blood, which the high priest carried along with him, was incapable of giving this satisfaction, yet it was accepted, as typical of the satisfactory blood-shedding and death of the Son of God, in the fulness of time. And here again let us observe the wonderful difference between the Levitical priesthood, and our Lord Jesus, the great antitype. They entered into the holy place, *with the blood of goats and*

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and calves, but Christ, *by his own blood*. As he was not a figurative or typical priest, so neither did he deal in typical sacrifices and blood. Long experience had proved that it was *not possible that the blood of bulls or goats could take away sin*. In all such offerings and sacrifices for sin God had no pleasure. It behoved our great High Priest, therefore, to offer such a sacrifice as would afford real and eternal satisfaction to the Infinite JEHOVAH. This could be no other than the *sacrifice of himself*, as in ver. 26.

The expression *his own blood*, is truly emphatical. It may be read *his proper blood*,—blood that was *his own*, so as not to belong to any other, but unto *himself*. And thus, as he was the High Priest, he was also the Sacrifice. Having completed the work of offering sacrifice upon the earth, he entered within the vail, carrying his own sacrifice,—*his own blood*, along with him, in respect of the infinite value, worth, and efficacy thereof, and he appears with the highest acceptance before God on the ground of it. *By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place*.—We may speak

- I. Of Christ's *entering into the holy place*;
- II. Of his entering there *by his own blood*; and, afterwards, add a few inferences.—We are,

- I. To speak of Christ's *entering into the holy place*.

We have to consider the High Priest of our profession as now there, in a state of the highest glory. He is gone into heaven, angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him. We are told that he entered *once* there, not to leave his place, or

return to this world, till he come for the judgment of it, at the last day. And says the apostle, chap. viii. 1. *Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*—We observe,

1. That Christ entered into the holy place above, as God and man, in one person. He came into our world, in the assumption of human nature into union with his Divine person. He was *God manifest in the flesh*,—God apparent, or become visible to men, in respect of the flesh which he assumed. No local motion can properly be ascribed unto him as God. Considered in this respect, he can neither be said to come, nor to depart. Even when he was dwelling among men in their nature, his Divine person was every where, filling all places at one and the same moment. John iii. 13. *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.* To descend, and to ascend, or, to come into the world, and to enter into heaven, properly belong to him, considered as clothed with our nature, or as God-man, Mediator.

Having assumed that nature, and taken it into a personal union with himself, that union could never be dissolved. Both his person and priesthood are unchangeable. He is *Jesus, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* Accordingly, at his entrance into heaven, he carried his human nature thither. Though the union between his holy human soul and body was dissolved in death, it recommenced at his resurrection, and both, united with his God-head, ascended up on high, and entered glory. But, although it was only in respect of his human nature
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that he could be said to ascend, and to enter into heaven, yet we are not to imagine that it was only a nature that did so, but his Divine person, as *IMMANUEL, God with us*. It was as a Divine person,—God in our nature,—that he obeyed and died; and, therefore, the same person entered into the holy place. So much is evident, among other scriptures, from the apostle's words, Eph. iv. 9, 10. *Now, that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.* Here we are taught, that there is as great a reality in his having ascended, as there was in his having *descended into the lower parts of the earth*. He did so, in his incarnation, death, and burial. He was *in the heart of the earth*, according to his own words. Now this could only take place with him, as incarnate, having our nature united with himself. Well, the very person, who thus *descended*, is the same also that *ascended up far above all the visible heavens, that he might fill all things*. The ascent of his human nature to heaven was visible, in the most certain and satisfactory manner, to the disciples, Acts i. 9, 10, 11.

2. He was active in entering into the holy place. So much is implied in the expression, *He entered in*. It denotes ability and activity on his part. He is represented as *going up* to heaven at his ascension. Acts i. 10, 11. The disciples *looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he WENT UP*. And the angels said to them, *This same Jesus—shall so come, as ye have seen him go into heaven*. When he spake of his ascension, in the days of his humiliation, he spoke of it, as one

does of a journey which he is able to perform. John xvi. 5. *Now I go my way to him that sent me.*

He had sufficient power of himself for entering into heaven,—for carrying up the human nature to that holy place. This must appear from his having power to raise his body out of the grave. *Destroy this temple,* said he, *and in three days I will raise it up.* He declared, that he *had power to lay down his life,* and he *had power to take it again,* John x. 18. Now, if he could take his human body out of the tomb, or had power in himself to *take again* that life which he had voluntarily *laid down,* at the commandment of his Father, it cannot be denied, that he had power to carry that human nature into the holy place. He who can raise his own dead body out of the grave, must be able to raise it from earth to heaven.

His entrance, therefore, into the holiest of all, was his own voluntary act. His human nature being personally united with his Godhead, it was impossible that it could be kept from partaking of his glory, except for a time,—the time that was necessary for accomplishing the work of his humbled estate. When this work was finished, it behoved him to *enter into his glory,* Luke xxiv. 26. He entered in such a manner as was peculiar to himself. The saints are carried to heaven by a power not their own; but Jesus entered actively by his own proper power, Psa. xlvii. 5. *God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.*

3. He entered into the holy place as a most acceptable person. He was, as we usually speak, made welcome there. To this purpose, he is not only said to *enter,* but also to be *taken,* and to be *received up into heaven,* Acts i. 9. Mark xvi. 19. JE-

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HOVAH the Father, as a righteous Judge, *raised him from the dead, and gave him glory*; that is, he took him into the holy place. He had promised to exalt him, and he attended to the accomplishment of his own promise. Acts v. 31. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand.*

There is no contradiction between his entering into heaven actively, and his being *taken* or *carried up* to it. As a Divine person, he entered by his own power, and as a righteous servant, who had exactly performed the work given him to do, he was taken up by JEHOVAH the Father. Nay, there is no absurdity in supposing that the ministry of angels was made use of on this grand and solemn occasion, and that they were employed, as instruments, in conveying his holy human nature into heaven. So much may appear from Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.* It was a part of the honour and glory which was to be conferred upon him, as Mediator, that he should be eminently countenanced by his righteous Father, after having glorified him upon the earth, by his life and death. He was to be honoured, and set on high, after being deserted and brought very low. Phil. ii. 8, 9. *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.*

He entered into the holy place, therefore, as one welcomed by all the glorious and glorified inhabitants there. While he had obeyed the law, and suffered

suffered all the curse of it, according to the appointment of God, his entrance into the heavenly state must have been truly acceptable to all. So that there was a solemn reception of him into that blessed place. *He was received up into heaven.* He was welcomed, as one entitled to the highest place there, —*the throne*, which is, indeed, *his own throne*. Rev. iii. 21, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in MY THRONE, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

4. He entered into the holy place, as a public person, sustaining an official character. This glorious event was witnessed by some on earth, and by all in heaven. In this sense he might be said to have entered publicly. As, after his resurrection, he did not shew himself *openly to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God*, so neither did he invite great multitudes to behold him *leaving the world, and going to the Father*. But he admitted his disciples to be witnesses thereof, for strengthening their faith, and giving them courage to preach his cross, now when they saw the reproach of it so completely wiped away. He left them with *his hands lifted up*, in the very act of *blessing them*, Luke xxiv. 50, 51. But though few, comparatively, were witnesses of his triumphant ascent from the earth; yet, we may be sure, that there were none in heaven that missed the sight of his entrance there. God, angels, and saints made perfect in glory, beheld him with the highest pleasure.

But what we principally intend here is, that he made his entrance into the holy place, in a public character and capacity,—in the very official character which he sustained, and in which he acted in our world.

world. He was a public person on earth, representing the whole body of the elect, as *the second man, the Lord from heaven*. He was a Mediator and Surety, acting in the room and name of his people. In the very same public character did he enter the holy place above. He is still standing in the same relation to his church and people on earth, as their Head and Surety. Col. i. 18. *He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead*. He is representing all his people in heaven, as much as he did in his former state and work upon earth. He entered that holy place *for them*, as they are all publicly represented in his person. Hence the apostle says, Heb. vi. 19, 20. *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul—which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is FOR US entered, even Jesus*. And hence also they are said to be *quicken'd together with Christ*, and to be *rais'd up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 5, 6.

5. He entered into the holy place gloriously,—in a glorified state and condition. The high priest of old was furnished with attire proper for the appearance he was to make in the holy of holies. We find, Lev. xvi. 4. that, on that occasion, he was to put on *the holy linen garments*. So our great High Priest put on his beautiful garments, when he returned to *his Father's house*. His entrance into heaven is said to be an *entering into his glory*, Luke xxiv. 26. The glory of heaven is his. The glory of the Father is his own proper glory. Hence he prayed, John xvii. 5. *Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*. While on earth, he appeared to be emptied

tied of the glory which belongs to him, as the eternal Son of God. Though he was *in the form of God*, and *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; yet he *made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*. His human nature served as a veil to conceal from mens eyes the glory of his person. He *grew up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground*; he had *no form nor comeliness*; and, when men *saw him*, there was *no beauty that they should desire him*. The glory of JEHOVAH was hid under *the fashion of a man, and the form of a servant*. *Is not this the carpenter's son?* said they, *and they were offended at him*.

But how glorious did he appear, when entering into the holy place! *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour*. He entered the heavenly mansions, displaying in his person the inconceivable glory of JEHOVAH, in the view of adoring angels and saints. He was confessed with their grateful and enlarged hearts, and celebrated in their songs of praise, as *the Lord of glory*, Psal. xxiv. 9, 10. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory*. Though he really entered in the human nature, yet it no longer acted as a veil for concealing the glorious dignity of his person. Every sinless infirmity, which it was necessary he should bear in his humbled estate on earth, was dropped in his resurrection from the dead. He was *crucified through weakness*, but now *he liveth by the power of his Godhead*. His *visage was marred by* the

the cruel usage of men, and the paleness of mortality, but now *his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars*. In short, his whole human nature is in such a state of glory, as is becoming that nature in union to the person of the Son of God. He has a peculiar glory belonging to him as IMMANUEL. Such was he in the view of John, when he was favoured with that extraordinary discovery of him, in the isle of Patmos. He still appeared as *one like unto the Son of man*, and he declared himself in these words, *I am the living One, and became dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. Rev. i. 10.—18.*

6. He entered into the holy place as a triumphant Conqueror over all his, and his people's enemies. He was not only a Priest, who had made an end of sin by the sacrifice of himself, but also a victorious King. As he had law and justice to satisfy, by his obedience unto death, in the room and stead of his people, so he had all the enemies of their salvation to overthrow and destroy. In the first revelation that was made of him, it was declared to be a special part of his work, that he should *bruise the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. In his life, and at his death, he had dreadful conflicts with the *powers of darkness*, and he had to enter into the territories of death and the grave.

Over all these, however, he was a victorious *Captain of salvation*. *I overcame*, says he, *and am set down with my Father in his throne*. At his death, when he seemed to be overcome—when he appeared, in human view, to be brought to the lowest state of weakness and incapacity,—when he seemed to be completely subjugated, and brought under the power
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of his enemies,—then he reached the full, the finishing, the destructive blow at the devil's interests. Then *his head* was completely *bruised*, his power broken. Heb. ii. 14. *As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* Col. ii. 15. *Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross; or, in himself, as One mighty to save, and no less mighty to tread down his enemies in his anger, and trample them in his fury.* His glorious victory over Satan and other enemies, was more eminently manifested in his resurrection and ascension into heaven. In his resurrection he actually triumphed over death and the grave, in rescuing his humanity from their power, so as they could have no dominion over him: and, by this, he also gave an undeniable proof of his victory over him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. When he entered heaven, he did so with such signal trophies of his success, that he appeared as if *red in his apparel, his garments dyed, as one that treadeth in the wine-fat*, and as if the carcases of his defeated foes had been dragged at the wheels of his chariot. So sung the church of old, in the faith and hope of it, Psal. lxxviii. 18. *Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive.*

7. He entered into the holy place, to enjoy the most delightful and everlasting rest. Hence he is said to have *entered into his rest*, Heb. iv. 10. He had the place of a servant, and lived a most laborious life, while on the stage of time. The work he was employed in was the most weighty and important.

portant. It was never over, while he lived. He had a time,—a day set, in which it was to be done. *I must work the works of him that sent me, said he, while it is day.* At length it was finished. John xix. 30.

At his ascension, he entered into the enjoyment of a glorious and eternal rest, in the human nature. He rests, with the highest satisfaction, in the contemplation of his work in this world, and of the blessed fruits thereof. What is said in Exod. xxxi. 17. concerning the Creator, when he had made heaven and earth, may be said concerning the Saviour, *He rested, and was refreshed.* It is true, he is still engaged in the exercise of all his offices, and especially as the Intercessor within the veil; but he rests from all the toils, and sorrows, and sufferings of his humbled estate. He will never again be *made under the law*, nor have any more need to *give his life a ransom*, or to *pour out his soul unto death*, in behalf of sinners. The high priest, under the legal dispensation, after having entered and officiated in the holy of holies, had to return to the congregation, and to the altar, to repeat sacrifices, and he had again to enter the most holy place with blood, on the same day of the next year. But, says the text, Christ *entered once into the holy place*, carrying with him *his own blood*,—blood of such a quality,—of such vast dignity and value, that he never can be required to shed more. *He hath ceased*,—for ever *ceased from his former work* of sacrificing. Heb. vii. 26, 27. *Such an High Priest became us, who is—made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then*

then for the people's: for this he did ONCE, when he offered up himself.

He, at the same time, entered into the holy place, to take possession of it, as a rest for all his people, — the rest which he purchased for them by his own blood. *There remaineth a rest for the people of God.* Thus Christ entered into it, as the public head of all his mystical members, to keep it open for them, and to receive them to the enjoyment of it. To the saints that are on the earth he is still saying, as to those that he immediately left behind him: *In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also,* John xiv. 2, 3.

8. In the last place, he entered into the holy place, to exercise all royal authority, as a priest upon his throne, Zech. vi. 13. He is not divested of any of his mediatory offices in his glorified state. Death, which puts an end to the official characters of men in this world, and lays both kings and priests aside from office, made no change upon him. He is both an interceding High Priest, and a reigning King in heaven. This is so much the case, that he spake of his going to heaven to *receive a kingdom*, according to that parable, Luke xix. 12. which is principally to be understood of himself. *A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom.* This means not, that he was not a king formerly, or that he had no kingdom; but it may be understood, not only of his taking actual possession of the heavenly kingdom, as God in our nature, but of his entering upon a more eminent, extensive

tensive, and glorious exercise of his kingly office, in his state of exaltation, than had ever taken place before.

When he entered heaven, his praises, as *the King of glory*, and as the church's King, resounded through all that blest abode. Psa. xlvii. 5—7. *God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding.* He now sits as King on his glorious high throne, and reigns through his extensive dominions in all worlds. He is most active in managing all the affairs of his spiritual kingdom in the church, and in the hearts of men. And he reigns to accomplish the complete ruin of all his implacable enemies. Psa. cx. 1.—

We proceed,

II. To speak of his entering into the holy place *by his own blood.*

We are not to conceive that he carried material blood into heaven, in the same way that the typical high priest brought the blood of slain beasts into the most holy place. But by *his own blood*, we are, chiefly, to understand the whole mediatory service and sufferings of his humbled state, which were finished in his death. His *entering by his own blood*, means his appearing in heaven with all the value, worth, and efficacy of the atoning sacrifice that he offered upon earth. He entered the holiest of all, not with the blood of others, but in virtue of his own precious blood.—We observe,

1. He entered by it, as blood already shed, according to divine appointment. The creatures, which

were offered in sacrifice, had their blood shed unto death, and this blood was taken by the high priest, and sprinkled both upon and before the mercy seat, within the vail. This was typical of the blood shedding and death of Christ, for procuring our peace and reconciliation with God. Having been substituted into the room of sinners, his blood must of necessity be shed, in order to his being a proper sacrifice for them. As running in his veins, it could not make atonement for sin. It must be shed, and the great sacrifice must be slain. Hence he says, Matth. xxvi. 28. *This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* He did not enter into the holy place to suffer, or to have his blood shed there; as, though the blood of the sacrifice was carried within the vail, yet it was shed without it.

Our Lord had his blood shed upon the earth. There the great sacrifice was offered up. In the most voluntary manner, *he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.* And the apostle says, verse 14. *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?* It was blood which he could offer to make atonement for the sins of his people, because, from the wonderful constitution of his person, he was qualified for being both the Priest and the Sacrifice, which no other ever was or could be. It is *the blood of him who offered himself.* He carried it within the vail, as blood already shed, —already offered to God, in our world. And, therefore, his taking away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, was previous to his entering into his glory.

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Heb. i. 3. *When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

2. He entered into the holy place by his own blood, as blood which had made real atonement, and given infinite satisfaction. We have already said, that there was no real satisfaction made for sin, by all the blood that was shed under the law; for it was impossible, absolutely impossible, that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. That blood was accepted only as of a typical nature. But the blood of Jesus Christ was really propitiatory and atoning. Rom. iii. 25. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.* This was the blood of a Surety,—of one who stood for others. Christ bled as a victim substituted into the room of men. Hence he is said to *give himself for us, to die for us, and to be made a curse for us.* Tit. ii. 14. Rom. v. 8. Gal. iii. 13. And, in his sufferings and death, he was actually officiating as a great High Priest, and offering himself to an offended God, for the express purpose of making atonement, according to verse 14, above repeated. *Christ through the eternal Spirit offered himself.* As to his Godhead, he is *the eternal Spirit.* JEHOVAH the Father never met with his fellow, in the person of any priest before. Both the priests and sacrifices under the law, were finite and perishing creatures. But here was a Priest of equal dignity with the offended God. He is that *man, who is the fellow of the LORD of hosts,* Zech. xiii. 7. Hence his blood must be of infinite value, being the *blood of God,* Acts xx. 28.

3. He entered into the holy place by his own blood, as infinitely meritorious of all New Covenant blessings. It not only gave satisfaction to divine jus-

tice, so as to deliver his elect from guilt and wrath, but it was also a valuable price paid down to purchase all spiritual benefits for them. Their persons are said to be *bought with a price*, and their heavenly inheritance is called a *purchased possession*. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Eph. i. 14.

The blood of Christ, which was shed for many, was divine blood. Though it was not, and could not be, the blood of a divine nature, yet it was the blood of a divine person; because the human nature, which was capable of having its blood shed, subsisted in union to the person of the Son of God. The *Deity* or *Godhead* could not suffer and die, but He, who is *the true God*, suffered and died in man's nature. Acts xx. 28. 1 John iii. 16. 1 John v. 20. The *Godhead* of the Redeemer gave an infinite worth and value to all the sufferings which he endured in the room of sinners. He merited all spiritual and eternal blessings,—not merely by a free passion, as the first Adam would have merited eternal life, according to the covenant of works,—but he merited by paying down a price, which is of real value in itself. And, therefore, when he entered into the holy place, he took possession of it in the name of his people, as an inheritance which of right belonged to him, as their Surety, who had bought it with *his own blood*. Thus the apostle adds in the last part of this verse. *He entered by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

4. He entered into the holy place to present his blood before the throne, as the meritorious ground of his powerful and prevalent intercession. He acted as a sacrificing Priest on earth, and he now officiates as an interceding Priest in heaven; and the first is

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the ground or foundation of the last. He could not be successful as an intercessor, by mere pleading for his people, if he had not a plea,—the plea of his own blood,—to urge before the throne. Hence the apostle John says, 1 Epist. ii. 1, 2. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* How are we assured, however, that he is successful, that he will be heard, and that he will gain the plea in behalf of sinners? Our assurance of this flows from his being *Jesus Christ the righteous.* He is *the righteous One*, as the author of a mediatory righteousness, which he completed on earth, and which he pleads in heaven. *He is the propitiation for our sins.* He is our advocate and our atonement,—our propitiatory sacrifice. It was of necessity that he should have somewhat to offer on earth, in order that he might have somewhat,—some proper, meritorious, and valuable plea to urge in heaven. Accordingly, he carried his own blood within the vail, not formally or materially, as the high priest carried visible or material blood, but really and virtually, in respect of the infinite value and efficacy thereof. He not only appears in human nature, but as one who bled and died in that nature. Though in a state of glorious and immortal life, yet he is for ever known and beheld to be that wonderful Person who once died. *I am he that liveth, and was dead, and I am alive for evermore, Amen.* His death is never forgotten, either by himself, or by any in the sanctuary above. He still appears *in the midst of the throne, as a Lamb that had been slain*, Rev. v. 6.

This precious blood, which he carried into the holy place, has the most striking and powerful language in it, in behalf of all those in whose room it was shed. Hence the apostle says, Heb. xii. 24.

Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. It speaketh, not literally in a vocal manner, but powerfully and efficaciously. If God *had respect to Abel's offering*, how much more to this? It has power with God, and prevails. It can never lose any of its worth and value. It is blood, in this respect, always fresh, and *of a sweet-smelling savour*. It is as sufficient and effectual for a ground of pardon, acceptance, and eternal salvation, to guilty sinners this day, as ever it was before.

But we are also to observe here, that there is not only a language in the blood of Christ, but he is to be considered as an active intercessor before the throne, on the footing of it. He still presents himself before God, in the nature, and in the name of his people, as sustaining the same public character that he had on earth, according to what we formerly said. Hence the apostle declares expressly in verse 24. that *Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God FOR US.* And, while he presents himself in their room, he also presents his blood, as blood that was really shed for them, to redeem them from all iniquity, and to purchase all good things for them. He presents it as the meritorious price of their *eternal redemption*. And, therefore, he actually intercedes, that all blessings may be bestowed on them for the sake of it. He has a legal claim upon the justice of God for this, because he hath fulfilled the conditional part of the New Covenant, by becoming obedient unto death. With the greatest equity, and with the fullest success, therefore, he demands their

their eternal salvation. He does not intercede, as a mere suppliant begging mercy,—mercy which he has no title to,—but he claims their salvation as a just debt to himself, upon the ground of his meritorious mediation. Hence we find him saying in John xvii. 24. *Father, I WILL that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.*

We shall now conclude this discourse with a few inferences.

I. Hence see, that we have great encouragement to rest by faith upon the blood of Christ, and to plead it on earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ has carried it into heaven. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to take it within the vail, and to present it in the immediate presence of JEHOVAH, as a righteous Judge. By the shedding of it, all the divine perfections were glorified. He met with the highest acceptance, and the most cordial welcome, when he entered glory as our great High Priest, upon the footing of his own blood. JEHOVAH said unto our Lord, when he ascended in our nature, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, wherefore he hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.* This is an infallible proof of the infinite sufficiency of his blood for all the great purposes for which it was shed. It is, therefore, a sure ground of faith for sinners. God sets him forth to you to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. You shall have redemption through it, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of divine grace. This is a powerful argument to be used

used by you in prayer to God. It is Christ's plea in heaven. Make it yours on earth. God says to you, *Behold the blood of the covenant*. Behold it, as offered to you,—as shed for you,—as sustained for you. The way in which saving faith speaks about the blood of the Lamb, is exemplified in such devout appropriating language, as is expressed in that song, Rev. v. 9. *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood*. And, as in the doxology, Chap. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*. The saints, as an holy priesthood, are to carry this precious blood to the throne of grace, in the exercise of believing, and what God says about it to them in the dispensation of grace, that they are to say to him in the prayer of faith, *Behold the blood of the covenant*. They have *boldness to enter into the holiest by this blood*, and it is their grand and never-failing argument there. *Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed*.

2. Hence see, the infinite excellency of Christ's priesthood above all others. This appears from his having entered, *not into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, and not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood*. No priest but himself durst presume to enter where he did. They were capable of officiating below in the typical tabernacle, according to God's appointment. But none of them were worthy of being admitted to act as priests in the heavenly sanctuary. When the godly among them entered in there at death, it was solely through the priesthood of Jesus, and not at all through their own. Nor are they priests in that

holy

holy place. They died out of their offices. None of that blood which they offered on earth could bear to be found in heaven. What an excellent High Priest, then, have we! With what gratitude and pleasure may we adopt the words of our apostle, chap. viii. 1. *We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens!* Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, Aaron, the saint of God, with all the believing priests of his order, are now surrounding the throne. But they hold their place there wholly upon the ground of His oblation and intercession, who is still *a Priest for ever upon his own throne*. So infinitely excellent was his sacrifice, that it was not only offered and accepted on earth, but it was worthy of being carried into glory, as the ground of standing to all the saints through eternity.

3. Hence see, what a noble and exalted object the faith of Christians has to terminate upon and to contemplate. This is *Christ in the holy place*. He *ascended far above all these visible heavens, that he might fill all things*. Is not that person, who is now filling the throne of glory, infinitely sufficient and worthy to fill the heart of every saint? Those, in whose hearts he dwells by faith, should be constantly exercised in looking above, where he is at the right hand of God, in a glorified human nature. He is now out of the reach of bodily eyes. The clouds of heaven received him out of the sight of the disciples long ago. He is an object eternally removed from the view of carnal men. The natural man cannot discern him. But he is still in the view of saving faith, and he is only in the view of it. It is still the privilege of believers to behold his glory, according

according to what he said to the disciples, John xiv. 19. *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me.* They were not only to see him after his resurrection from the dead, so as to fill their hearts with joy and gladness, but they should see him by faith, after he was altogether withdrawn as to his bodily presence at his entrance into the holy place. Thus one of the apostles, as the mouth of all true believers, says, *We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour*, the very same Jesus, *who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death.* He was a wonderful object of faith, even upon the cross. There was one person who was enabled to a very clear and distinct exercise of believing on him, at a time when both the Saviour and himself were suspended between heaven and earth. The converted thief *said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom.* What wonders cannot the grace of God perform! Here was a dying sinner illuminated to look through the pains, the horrors, and the ignominy of the cross, to the glory of IMMANUEL'S person, and to his all-sufficiency as a Saviour. He saw that he was able, and that he had authority, to bring sinners to the kingdom of eternal glory, through the merit of that very blood which he, in his own body, was now shedding on the tree. How rich and refreshing was the answer which this poor man got from the compassionate Redeemer! *And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* This answer, like the Author of it, was full of grace and truth. Your faith, Christian, has now to look into paradise. There you see *Jesus crowned with glory and honour.* He no longer officiates as a

priest upon his cross, but he is still a *priest upon his throne*. You have not to go to an inn, or to a manger, to seek the holy child Jesus. He is no longer agonizing in the garden, nor on the cross. He has entered into his rest, and into his glory. The eye of faith, like that of godly Stephen, can look stedfastly into heaven, and see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

4. We may learn, that the people of God have the best ground for the hope of eternal life. Their being brought to glory depends entirely upon Christ's being made perfect through sufferings, as the meritorious cause of it. But it is also secured by his glorification. Has he entered into the holy place, and is he now sitting on the throne of his glory? It must follow, that all true believers shall be with him, to behold his glory. He was not glorified as a private person, but as a public head and representative. The breast-plate of the Jewish high priest, on which were inscribed the names of the tribes, was but a faint type of that representation which is made of all the saints in the person of their glorified Surety. He entered, says this apostle, to appear in the presence of God for us. And he carried along with him blood which was meritorious of their glorification. They shall, therefore, be glorified together with him. Col. iii. 4. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory*. Nothing can prevent this. The law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied, sin is atoned for, and God is glorified. Jesus, though now in glory, cannot forget his people on earth. His love to them is without variableness, or shadow of turning. *Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Let sinners be exhorted to come to this great High Priest. He is the same in his person, in his mediation, in his grace and compassion for guilty men, that ever he was. *This Priest continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood: wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* His blood is set before you all in the everlasting gospel, as a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. And, although he is in the holy place, as to his bodily presence, yet he is also here to-day, to receive sinners.—Consider that, without a saving interest in him, you must perish. The forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of your natures, deliverance from the curse, and a right to heaven, are blessings enjoyed only through his blood.—Beware of mistaking the method of acceptance with God, and of obtaining eternal happiness. It is that precious blood, which Christ shed on earth, and which he now pleads in heaven, on which you must depend for salvation. *He made peace by the blood of his cross. Sinners, who were some time far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

Let believers study to make a daily improvement of Christ, who is now entered into the holy place by his own blood. By faith in this blood only you can maintain a sense of pardon and peace with God, make progress in holiness, and so become meet for heaven.—Look up to your glorified High Priest within the vail, for all the blessings which you need. He obtained a right to these for you, by his own blood, and, therefore, he has authority to dispense them.—Look up to him for the Holy Spirit, which you need at all times, but especially in the solemn service

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service of this day. Jesus promised to *send the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth*, in an eminent degree, after he was gone to the Father. He remembers his promise, and he well knows, that we all need the accomplishment of it.—Draw nigh to God in his ordinances through Christ. Whatever prevailing sense of unworthiness you may have, take encouragement from the blood of Jesus. *We have boldness to enter into the holiest by it.* Be earnest that you may have communion with God in this way. Improve it by faith, in approaching to the holy table of the Lord, saying, *I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.*

S E R M O N XIV.

CHRIST HATH OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION FOR HIS PEOPLE *.

HEBREWS ix. 12.

—*Having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

THE Lord manifested his great goodness and glorious power, in bringing his people Israel out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of
 I i 2 bondage.

* This Sermon contains the substance of two Discourses preached at Haddington, the first on Sabbath, February 25. 1798, immediately before the dispensation of the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper; and the second on the following Sabbath.

bondage. He promised this, when they were groaning under the most abject and intolerable slavery. *Exod. vi. 6. I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage; and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.* According to this promise he brought about their enlargement, by a course of very dreadful plagues upon Pharaoh and his kingdom, and gave occasion to his chosen people to sing that song, *Exod. xv. 13. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed.* This deliverance was so great, that it was never to be forgotten by them. Among other means of perpetuating the remembrance of it, the passover was instituted; and, although it was first celebrated in Egypt, previous to their actual departure out of that country, yet the observation of it was enjoined upon them in all succeeding generations, as a memorial of their emancipation from Egyptian tyranny and slavery. *Ye shall observe,* said God, *this thing for an ordinance to thee, and to thy sons for ever.—It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord, for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel, in their generations,* *Exod. xii. 24, 42.*—We are met this day to keep the Christian passover, in the sacrament of the supper. We have more important and weighty reasons for doing so than the Israelites had. The deliverance which God wrought for them, though it was great, and wonderful, and glorious, yet it was but a temporal deliverance from temporal misery. It was a faint type of the spiritual deliverance to be wrought by Christ in the fulness of time. He

espoused

espoused the cause of sinners, who had *sold themselves* by sin, and were brought into a lost and miserable state, under bondage infinitely worse than Egyptian. He engaged to accomplish, and actually hath accomplished, their redemption. The remembrance of this work, as finished in his death, it is the design of the sacrament of the supper to perpetuate. With enlarged hearts should we be employed in this service, considering the precious and comfortable truth contained in the text. *By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

To shew that Jesus Christ is the great substance prefigured by that shadowy dispensation which the Jews were under, and to illustrate the excellency of his person, priesthood, and sacrifice, above all the types, are the principal objects of the apostle in this epistle. In the first part of this verse, he points out the great difference between Him and the Jewish high priest, with respect to their entering within the vail. The typical priest entered into a *holy place made with hands*, which was only a figure of the true, but Christ *into heaven itself*. The former entered *with the blood* of slain beasts, which *could not take away sin*, but the latter *with his own blood*, by which sin was fully atoned for, peace was made, and complete salvation was purchased. Accordingly, in the words of our text, the apostle mentions one reason of his *entering only once into the holy place*,—because he had *obtained eternal redemption for us*. The typical high priest could not obtain any proper redemption or reconciliation. He could not make any real atonement for sin. He only made a typical atonement, and that but for one year. He had, therefore,

378 *Christ hath obtained eternal Redemption*

fore, to offer more blood, and to re-enter the most holy place on the same day of the following year. But Christ *entered once by his own blood*, because it was truly propitiatory and satisfactory. By it he procured redemption for sinners, which could be done by none that went before him. Observe,

1. What Christ hath obtained. *Eternal redemption*. Redemption means the absolution or deliverance of a person from a state of thralldom and misery, by paying an adequate price for his liberty. The original word here signifies so much. All mankind, and elect sinners among the rest, are by nature in a state of spiritual bondage and wretchedness, in consequence of sin. They have forfeited all right to any thing truly good, and have plunged themselves into an abyss of sin and misery, from which they could not procure freedom for themselves. And it was impossible that they could be delivered, but by a Redeemer, who was able to pay a price for their redemption. Jesus Christ paid this price, which was no other than his own precious blood, according to the context. He calls it *his life*, Matth. xx. 28. *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*. By *redemption*, then, we understand all that deliverance and complete salvation, which Christ purchased, and which he confers upon his people. It is *eternal redemption*. It is lasting, yea, everlasting in its nature and effects. It neither can fail nor be forfeited.

2. Christ is said to have *obtained* this redemption. The original word properly signifies *to find*. *Having found eternal redemption*. It denotes, that sinners had lost it,—had lost all true happiness, and could

could not find it,—could not find a way of being restored to the enjoyment of it. Redemption is so precious, and so difficult to be obtained, that none was equal to this but such a person as Jesus Christ. To obtain it, was the end of his incarnation, of his life, and of his death. This end he hath gained. He procured redemption meritoriously, by his active and passive obedience. In his death the ransom-price was completely paid, and a way was opened for setting captive sinners at liberty, and for conferring upon them eternal happiness. All this is a debt to Christ now, in consequence of his giving the legal and absolutely sufficient price of his own blood for it. *Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.*—In discoursing further upon this subject, we shall speak, more particularly,

I. Of this redemption, which Christ hath obtained;

II. Of his obtaining it, and then add a few inferences for improvement.—We are,

I. To speak, more particularly, of this redemption, which our exalted High Priest hath obtained for his people.

1. It is the fruit of God's gracious purpose from eternity. It was contrived before the world began, though it was meritoriously obtained, and is actually conferred, only in time. It is the product of eternal love, which God exercised toward some of lost mankind. Jer. xxxi. 3. *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have*

have I drawn thee. He foresaw that, although he would create man upright, and give him full ability for yielding obedience to him, in order to the enjoyment of eternal life, yet man would become a rebel against him, would violate his holy law, and thus involve himself and all his posterity in guilt and misery. In this sad condition he might have left the whole human family to continue for ever. He would have been righteous and holy, in giving them up to the consequences of their apostasy from him through endless eternity. But his gracious thoughts towards us are above all thought. *He remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever.* In himself he purposed to have a certain definite number of the human race recovered out of that deplorable state, into which they would bring themselves by their sin. He loved them, when they were most unlovely, and had no claim to his regard. To this may be applied the language which is expressed by the pen of the prophet, Ezek. xvi. 6, 8. *When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was a time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness.*

In order that *mercy might be built up for ever*,—that it might be eternally displayed and glorified in their redemption,—JEHOVAH entered into a covenant with his own eternal Son, who, by his voluntary engagement in that covenant, became their Redeemer. He was set apart, by the eternal purpose of God, to effectuate their salvation in time. Prov.

viii. 23. He was set up to work redemption on the earth, in the prospect of which he had the highest pleasure. He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. We find that the persons to be redeemed were no less the objects of God's eternal choice. Eph. i. 4. *He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.* The purchase of their redemption by Christ was, therefore, according to the everlasting purpose and counsel of God. The revelation of the mystery of redemption in the world, and the incarnation, obedience, and death of the Son of God, in order to obtain that redemption, were just the unfolding and executing of an eternal and gracious decree. Eph. iii. 10, 11. *The mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, or, the manifold wisdom of God appearing in redemption, is made known by the church, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* We find also that Christ, the Lamb of God, was appointed to have his precious blood shed for procuring this redemption, *before the foundation of the world,* 1 Pet. i. 18,—20.

2. Christ hath obtained full and complete redemption for his people. To this purpose we are told, that *with the Lord is plenteous redemption,* Psal. cxxx. 7. It extends to, and includes in it, deliverance from all the evils which necessarily belong to our natural estate, unto all the good contained in the promises of God's covenant.—This, it will be necessary, to illustrate in a few distinct particulars.

1st, It is redemption from sin. Psal. cxxx. 8. *He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* All men are guilty before God, as law-breakers in Adam, and

and in their own persons. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. We know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Rom. v. 12. and iii. 19. 23.* The guilt of every sin binds over, and necessarily subjects the sinner to a curse. *Gal. iii. 12. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* It is, therefore, a dreadful state to be lying under guilt, and to have a holy and just God beholding us with indignation, as laden with our iniquities. *The wages of sin is death.* But redemption includes freedom from the guilt of sin, by an act of pardoning mercy, which is passed upon the footing of Christ's blood. *Eph. i. 7. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace.* And this forgiveness is universal. It extends to all the iniquities of the sinner. *Jer. xxxiii. 8. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.* Christ made a full atonement, and, therefore, a full pardon must be the consequence.

As sin has a criminal guilt in it, so it is the spiritual pollution and defilement of the soul. It is that *abominable thing that God hates*, and it renders a person loathsome and vile in his sight. *How abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?* Job xv. 16. But this redemption includes purification from the filth and pollution of sin, as it

is the moral uncleanness of the soul. Hence Christ is said to have given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people; and God hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit. ii. 14. and iii. 5. Sin hath lost that reigning power which it once had over the redeemed of the Lord. It is no longer their master, to whom they yield themselves servants to obey. It doth take place with them, as there is no perfection in the present state; but it doth not reign with an uncontrolled sway. Rom. vi. 14. Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. They shall obtain deliverance from all remaining sin in them, and be redeemed to perfect holiness at last; for Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it;—that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish, Eph. v. 25.—27.

2dly, This is redemption from a state of subjection to the law, considered as a broken covenant of works. Gal. iv. 4, 5. When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. Here it is declared, that Christ's redeemed people were under the law. This must mean, that they were under it, as a broken Covenant, for, in any other sense, redemption from it would not be a privilege. The whole body of mankind was considered as in the first Adam, when this Covenant was made with him. He was the federal head and representative of all his ordinary posterity. And, of consequence,

quence, when he brake the covenant, he left them all under it, in that state of it. It still requires perfect obedience to all the commands of the law; for, although men have lost their power to obey, yet it cannot follow, that God has lost his right to demand obedience. The law continues to say, *Do, Obey, Pay that which thou owest.* Now, considering that we possess no ability to yield any obedience to it, it must be dreadful to be subjected to its claim. Though one act of sinless obedience were to be sustained as a fulfilment of all its demands, yet even that we could not perform. We are *corrupt*, and such must every action be, however good as to the matter of it. Foolish and ruinous, beyond expression, is that natural propensity in men to seek salvation *by the works of the law*; for, (Gal. iii. 10.) *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.*

But the redemption that is in Christ Jesus includes deliverance from both the commanding and condemning power of the law, as a Covenant. The condemning sentence of its curse, was executed upon the Surety, in his sufferings unto death, and it cannot be executed twice. Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* We are not, however, to imagine, that he bare the curse only in order to leave his people under the law as a Covenant, in respect of its commands. Had this been the case, then, considering that each of them is imperfect, while in this world, every sin that they commit would again involve them under the curse. But as he bare the infliction of the penalty, so he completely obeyed the commands of the law, that it might have no claim whatever upon his people, and that they might be justified, not for any obedience of
their

their own, but upon the ground of *his* obedience and satisfaction, in their stead. He was *made under the law, to redeem them*,—to buy them from *under the law's* claim, so that it might have no more to demand from them, having got full reparation of its breach from him, as their Surety. Perfect deliverance from it, as a Covenant, is a special part of the blessedness of all true believers. Thus the apostle speaks of it, Rom. vii. 4. 6. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.—Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held.* At the same time, though believers are redeemed from a state of subjection to the law, as a Covenant, yet they are by no means freed from an obligation to obey it, as a rule of holiness in all manner of conversation. They are not allowed, and they dare not allow themselves, to live licentiously. *What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.* Rom. vi. 15. 1 Cor. ix. 21.

3dly, This is redemption from Satan's dominion. Men, in consequence of sin, have fallen under his power. This may be considered as a part of the punishment due to their rebellion against God, or an article of the misery which is the natural and just fruit of it. By Justice they are delivered into his power, as a jailor, to detain them in prison, until judgment be executed upon them. Men in a natural estate are also to be considered as the voluntary servants and slaves of the devil. *He worketh in the children of disobedience*, and, like a strong man armed

keeping his palace, his goods are at peace. His power is mentioned as meeting with no resistance or opposition from the corrupt and unrenewed man. *They are taken captive by him at his will,* 2 Tim. ii. 26. How much do the captives of Satan abound in the present time! Wherever you see persons living in wilful ignorance of, and carelessness about, religion,—persisting in unbelief,—indulging and encouraging themselves in infidelity,—or habitually practising open profaneness and wickedness,—there you see the slaves of the devil. They are as really under his destructive power and influence, as captives, loaded with fetters, are under the power of their conqueror. This is the dismal situation of all men by nature, as the apostle testifieth, Eph. ii. 2, 3.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to deliver his people from this great and powerful adversary. He *brake the head* of the crooked serpent, according to what was foretold in the first promise, Gen. iii. 15. He answered that question to perfection, which we have in Isa. xlix. 24, 25. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.* He brought destruction upon Satan and his interests, on behalf of his own elected people, in becoming obedient unto death. He was a partaker of flesh and blood, that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, Heb. ii. 14. Believers are legally rescued from the power of that infernal spirit, through Christ's bearing the execution of the law-curse, and making complete satisfaction for

for their sins. And they are actually delivered from his dominion, in the day of their conversion, when they are brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. In that day, the Lord *destroys the works of the devil* within them, overturns his throne, and assumes the government of the heart for himself, according to the representation given in that parable, Luke xi. 21, 22. *When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are at peace. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.* This is a most advantageous conquest for the sinner. Not only is Christ glorified, and the devil defeated and spoiled, but the person's situation is changed inconceivably to the better. To be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, is a blessedness the most happy and lasting. When men are once actually redeemed from Satan's power, they can never afterwards be reduced under it. That enemy may tempt and harass them, and may, in part, prevail against them by his temptations, but he never shall regain his power and authority over them, nor succeed in doing them any lasting injury. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.* He is ever ready to take their part in withstanding the devil. Zech. iii. 1, 2. *He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* They shall at last be delivered from all liableness to temptation. The devourer shall not

only be rebuked, but be destroyed for *their sakes*. Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

4thly, This is redemption from the world. The world is another tyrannical master, under whose power and influence all men naturally are. Through human corruption, it is become an enemy to God and religion. It is a rival to the Most High, endeavouring to keep the hearts of men from him, and is, indeed, so opposite to him, that the love of it, and love to God, are absolutely incompatible with another. 1 John ii. 15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* To the unconverted man the world is *the chief good*, and so it is the grand object of his pursuit. It is often so, even under a religious aspect; we mean, that while persons may have a religious profession and appearance,—may express a considerable regard to what is good,—and may seem to have a great dislike to what is impious and wicked,—yet, with all their religious appearance, the world may be uppermost in their hearts. From thence flow that activity and assiduity which they display about their worldly interests, and that languor and negligence which they manifest about the interests of religion. It is not a little to be feared, that many professors are held in chains by a worldly spirit, and pine away in their iniquity, under a fair religious mask. A carnal and earthly disposition will prove the ruin of many, who seem to escape the grosser pollutions of irreligion, profaneness, and lust, which are in the world.

The world is thus a great enemy to the souls of men. It has such a power over men, that they, instead

stead of studying to make their temporal affairs subservient to the interests of religion, on almost all occasions, endeavour to make religion, and the services of it, bend and stoop to their worldly concerns. Instead of making religion *the mistress*, and the world *the handmaid*, they invert this beautiful order, and make the world *the mistress*, and religion only *the handmaid*; or, they say to the world, as to *the man with the gold ring and gay clothing*, *Sit thou here in a good place*; and to religion, as to *the poor man in vile raiment*, *Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool*.

True Christians are no longer the slaves of the world. They are redeemed from the power of this fascinating and destructive foe. This redemption Christ hath obtained for them, and bestows upon them. Gal. i. 4. *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*. Through the powerful influence of his cross, they are become as dead men, to it, and it is become dead to them, as the apostle expresses it, Gal. vi. 14. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*. Others are *of the world*, but they are *chosen out of it*. They are redeemed from that carnal and earthly spirit, which naturally possessed them as well as the rest of men. They are redeemed from the earth, Rev. xiv. 3. They are convinced that the world is nothing, in comparison of their souls, and that its profits and pleasures are as empty husks, when compared with the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the pleasures to be enjoyed at God's right hand for ever more. They can, therefore, say,

as in 2 Cor. iv. 18. *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

5thly, The redemption, which Christ hath obtained, includes freedom from divine wrath, both now, and hereafter. This belongs to redemption from the curse of the law, of which the wrath of God is the heaviest article. Sin exposes men to this. *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, are denounced upon every soul of man that doeth evil, Rom. ii. 8, 9.* How dreadful must this wrath be, considering how great God is! *Who knoweth the power of his anger?* To it the people of God are exposed naturally, being *the children of wrath even as others, Eph. ii. 3.*

But by Christ they are redeemed from it. He bare it to the uttermost in his own person, so that perfect freedom from it, is their blessed attainment. They are presently out of all hazard of feeling any of the effects of God's vindictive indignation. It is becoming each of them to sing, *O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.* Rods and chastisements they may, and often do, meet with, and these, perhaps, very smarting and severe, but there is no vindictive wrath in them. Their cup of affliction, though it is often large and deep, is sweetened with love, but it contains not one drop of the curse. *Psal. lxxxix. 32, 33. I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.* And they are in no danger of wrath hereafter. There is
wrath

wrath to come, as to the ungodly. They are presently under it, but there is a more dreadful storm of divine anger a-coming. From this the redeemed of the Lord have nothing to fear. Rom. v. 8, 9. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.* 1 Theff. i. 10. *Wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.* When the great day of God's wrath shall come, and the wicked be unable to stand, the people of God will find safety and peace under IMMANUEL'S shadow, who will then prove to be a *hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.*

6thly, This is redemption from death and the grave. Thus runs that promise in Hof. xiii. 14, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.* The Lord's redeemed people are not absolutely freed from the stroke of death. Death, as it means a dissolution of the union between soul and body, must be borne by the saints, as well as by sinners. There is, in this respect, one event to both. Daily do we see, that *spiritually-wise men die*, and likewise that *the fool and the brutish person perish*. But from death, considered as a penal evil, coming in the channel of the broken covenant, are all the Lord's people fully redeemed. Death doth not come to them as an effect of the law-curse. To the wicked it is a part of the execution of that curse, and it is the harbinger of hell. When temporal death approaches a wicked man, it may be said, *Is not the sound of eternal death*

death behind him? Shall not hell follow after him? Yes; *the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.* But to the Christian, death is only a passage, and it is a safe passage to IMMANUEL'S land, as to his soul; while the body *falls asleep in Jesus.* It is, therefore, a *precious death in the fight of the Lord*, and will be so in the everlasting experience of all the saints.

But the redemption which Christ hath obtained extends also to the recovery of the bodies of believers from that temporary dominion which death and the grave seem to have over them. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave, says he, I will redeem them from death.* Their bodies shall not continue for ever in the state of the dead. He will separate and restore their dust from that with which, for many ages, it may be mixed. *I will raise him up at the last day,* is a promise that will hold true as to every redeemed person. So that the Lord says to his people, in the prospect of their death, as he said to Jacob, Gen. xlv. 3, 4, *I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will go down with thee into Egypt; and will also surely bring thee up again.*

7thly, This is a redemption from hell,—the pit of eternal perdition. As men, by sin, have deserved everlasting punishment, so there is a state and place in which this is to be inflicted upon them. It is said to be *prepared for the devil and his angels*, and it is no small part of the misery of ungodly men, that they must *depart into*; and be punished for ever in, the same place with that wretched society. Matth. xxv. 41. *Into it all men deserved to have been cast, as all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. It is the portion of wicked men from God, and the heritage.*

ritage appointed unto them by God. But Christ hath obtained redemption from it for all his people. Though they are all in hell naturally, in point of demerit, yet they are delivered from any liableness to an actual descent to the sides of the pit. They have to sing, as the Psalmist does in Psa. lxxxvi. 13. *Great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.* Upon the footing of the ransom-price which Christ hath paid, a just and holy God puts them, by a sentence of justification, out of all danger of being turned into hell. *He is gracious unto them; and saith, Deliver them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom,* Job xxxiii. 24. When that *Tophet*, which is made deep and large, shall open its mouth to receive the whole body of the reprobate world, none of those who are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, shall be in any hazard. Their glorious Redeemer *has the keys of hell and death*, and he knows whom to shut into that prison, and whom to shut out, Rev. i. 18. There is no reason for them to be afraid of hell, considering who has the power over it. It is *I* who was made dead for you, says he to his saints, it is even *I* who *who have the keys of hell and death.*

8thly, This is redemption to all that is good,—to all the good opposed to those evil things from which they are redeemed. It includes not only freedom from all the miseries unto which we had exposed ourselves by our apostasy from God, but also restoration to all that good which we had forfeited. This is summed up in *redemption to God*, according to the song of the church: Rev. v. 9, *They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and*
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to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. It is redemption to God, as a pacified and reconciled God in Christ, so that they enjoy his favour and love which is better than life. Rom. v. 1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* They are redeemed to the enjoyment of all the blessings of God's everlasting covenant, such as pardon, acceptance, adoption, sanctification, divine protection, consolation, and perseverance. Heaven, the mortgaged or forfeited inheritance, is redeemed for them, and they obtain an irrevocable title and right to it. Eph. i. 13, 14. *We were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.* Eternal life in the full enjoyment of a Three-One God, is just the sum of this precious redemption. And hence the day of the believer's glorification is emphatically called, *The day of redemption.* Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.* In short, it is redemption unto the enjoyment of all necessary blessings while the believer is on his journey through the wilderness, and to eternal rest and happiness in the land where glory dwells, when his journey is at an end. *The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly,* Psa. lxxxiv. 11.—But we proceed to observe,

3. That this redemption is special and particular. As the purpose of salvation from eternity did not respect all men in general, so neither did Christ shed his precious blood to redeem them all. *Universal* salvation,

salvation, though a doctrine which has been warmly espoused and propagated by some, is wholly subversive of the *scripture* doctrine of redemption. The scripture assures us, that there was a definite number chosen to salvation from among mankind. These are frequently called *elect*, or chosen ones, to distinguish them from the rest of the world lying in wickedness, and left to perish. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* They are *elect* according to the foreknowledge of God. He knows whom he hath chosen; for the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*. It is evident, further, that Christ did not obtain redemption for any, but those whom God had chosen, because they were given to him for that end, exclusive of others. John xvii. 6, 9, 19. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me.—I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.—And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* He calls them *his sheep*, while the rest of the world are considered, and will be separated from them, as goats. John x. 11, 14, 15. *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.—I am the good shephtrd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.* Redemption is spoken of as their peculiar privilege, in contradiction from others. *They are said to be redeemed from among men*, which, if Christ had redeemed all men, would be an unmeaning and inconsistent phrase. Rev. xiv. 4. *These,—the Lamb's retinue, who are with*

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with him, as to their profession, state, and exercise, —were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb. If the Redeemer shed his precious blood intentionally as the price of redemption for all, then he must lose much of the fruit of his soul-travail; since, according to Scripture-testimony, few, comparatively speaking, are saved. Strive, said Christ himself, to enter in at the strait gate: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it. But this redemption was specially and only obtained for a certain number, whom Christ had in his eye in the obtaining of it. For their sakes I sanctify myself, said he. “It is for them exclusively that “I have devoted myself to the office of a Mediator, “and that I now give myself to be a propitiatory “and meritorious sacrifice in their stead.” And it is impossible that any of these can miss the benefit of his mediation. John vi. 37. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. He is under an indispensable, and, at the same time, delightful necessity, to convert and save all who were given to him, and for whom he died; and it is simply impossible that he should not do so. He tells us that he must bring them. John x. 16. Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice. You should be deeply concerned, that you may hear his pleasant voice, and may accept of this redemption, while he is proclaiming it among you all indefinitely, without respect of persons. You cannot know, and, indeed, you have no business to know the secrets of Almighty God, or who are the designed objects of this redemption. Attend to the things which are revealed, for these belong to you;

you; and do not presume to meddle with *the secret things belonging to the Lord our God*. Your revealed duty is presently to believe on the Redeemer, and to embrace the redemption which he hath obtained, and is now setting before you. It is only through union to him by faith, that persons are made actual partakers of it, and so come to know that they are among *the redeemed of the Lord*. 1 Cor. i. 30. *Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

4. This redemption is absolutely free. This surely should recommend and entitle it to our attention. Let none of us say in our hearts, "The salvation which Christ hath obtained is very great, very rich, and very suitable; but how shall *we* obtain it? What good have *we* done, what acceptable qualifications are *about us*, to give *us* a warrant and confidence to lay claim to it?" Let us know, from the whole tenor of the Bible, that redemption is, as to us, in every respect absolutely gratuitous. It cost Christ much, but it costs us nothing. To found our right to it, nothing on our part is required. Prerequisite qualifications are dictated only by our legal hearts. We are *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. iii. 24. There was nothing foreseen about the objects of redeeming love, to influence JEHOVAH to choose *them*, or the Eternal Son of God to undertake *their* redemption, more than about others. They are, by nature, in the same condition as other men are, and many of them have been distinguished sinners, previous to the time of their being effectually called by the grace of Christ. Witness Paul's confession, 1 Tim.

i. 13. *I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant. All who are saved, are saved by grace. Eph. ii. 8. Salvation is never promised,—never bestowed,—on the ground of foreseen faith or good works. Tit. iii. 5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. None of the redeemed will have cause, either in less or more, to take any of the praise to themselves. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Christ Jesus is of God made unto us—redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The redemption of the whole elect body, and of every individual thereof, is from the exceeding abundant riches of free and sovereign grace. Eph. i. 7. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*

5. This redemption is infallible, as to the beginning, the progress, and the completement of its application unto the souls of the Lord's people. It is perfected, as to the purchase of it. Christ hath obtained it, says the text. The same is taught in that similar passage, chap. v. 9. *And, being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.* It shall also be infallibly applied to them, as he could not obtain it in vain. *All that the Father giveth me, says he, shall come to me; that is, they shall have a saving interest in that redemption which he hath purchased. And when once they are made actual partakers of it, the completion of it in due time shall certainly follow. They are redeemed from guilt, and from a state of subjection*

to the curse,—unto the enjoyment of God's favour, in justification. They are gradually redeemed from sin, unto conformity to God's image, in sanctification. And this work shall be completed in a state of eternal glory. The promises of God, who is faithful, secure this. *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.* The purchase of Christ renders it infallible, because he cannot want any thing which he bought with his blood. The redemption of his people shall be perfected by his power. He is infinitely able to do it, and to beat down all the opposition made to it by his and their enemies. Neither sin, nor Satan, nor the world, shall prevent their complete redemption. *Their Redeemer is mighty; he shall thoroughly plead their cause; for the LORD of hosts is his name, the holy One of Israel.*

6. It is, according to the text, *eternal redemption*. It is a great blessing, but it would spoil its value, if it might be only temporary,—if it might fail and be lost, and, of consequence, men be again reduced to the former state of bondage and misery. Blessed be God! this shall never be the case. It was purposed to be eternal redemption, and God unalterably decreed those, who were to be redeemed, unto the enjoyment of eternal life. Acts xiii. 48. *As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed.* His love to his redeemed people is immutable and everlasting. *He hath loved them with an everlasting love,—a love in which he will rest for ever, and from which nothing in heaven, on earth, or in hell, shall be able to separate them.* Jer. xxxi. 3. Zeph. iii. 17. Rom. viii. 38, 39. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, which is the price of this redemption, is of un-

changeable and eternal value. He gave *himself* for them, *an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour*. The standing of the redeemed in the eternal state is not in themselves, but in their glorious Redeemer, and, therefore, they cannot lose the happiness conferred upon them. They are for ever *in his hand*, and hence are absolutely safe. John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*—We proceed,

II. To speak of Christ's *obtaining* redemption for his people.—We observe,

1. That this supposes his being invested with a public and representative character. He could not have procured redemption for them, if he had not been substituted into their room and place, and become responsible for them at the bar of an offended God. They were guilty sinners, under a sentence of condemnation, and they could not be redeemed from that state, unless an atonement was made for their guilt, and satisfaction so given to divine justice. He was, therefore, constituted their Surety and Representative, and took their place, to *fulfil all righteousness* for them. Hence he is said to be *made under the law, to redeem them,—to suffer for them,—to be wounded and bruised for their iniquities,—and to die for them*. These and other expressions denote a real substitution of him into their room and stead in law-reckoning. And this was necessary, that what was done and endured by him, in order to accomplish their redemption, might be imputed unto them.

Besides,

Besides, it is here to be observed, that as he represented them, so it behoved him to do it in their own nature. Being *lawful captives*, on account of their own crimes, they could not be liberated, without suffering the infliction of the deserved punishment. And justice demanded that this punishment should be executed, either upon themselves, or upon a Surety partaking of the same nature with themselves. Christ, accordingly, had to assume their nature, for *in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*. He was thus qualified to be their Redeemer, in respect of the constitution of his person, being, as to humanity, *the Son of man, one of the people, and their near kinsman*. This was prefigured by that article of the ceremonial law, referring to the redemption of bond-men, which you read of, Lev. xxv. 47,—49. *If a sojourner or a stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself to the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: Either his uncle, or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is near of kin unto him, of his family, may redeem him. In like manner, that Christ might obtain eternal redemption for us, he must become near of kin to us, in having a nature like ours, though not morally corrupted and depraved as ours is. That he should assume our nature, in the sinful state of it, was impossible; but even if it had been possible, and had he done it accordingly, it would have entirely disqualified him for acting as our Surety: because such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. But he was really*

made flesh, and was as much in the likeness of sinful flesh as he could be, not to be sinful flesh. God sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh; but in him was no sin. Rom. viii. 3. 1 John iii. 5.

2. That Christ obtained redemption meritoriously, by paying down a proper price for it. We formerly observed, that the word here translated *redemption* means the deliverance of a captive, by affording a price for procuring his liberty. In this sense, it is expressive of the manner in which Christ hath redeemed his people. When we consider the state in which elect sinners are by nature, it appears absolutely necessary that their recovery from it should be by making a real purchase of their persons, and of all good things for them. They were the captives of the law and justice of God, which had an equitable and undeniable claim upon them, for a debt of obedience and satisfaction. Being insolvent, and altogether unable to redeem themselves, it was not possible that they should be freed from that state of bondage and woe under the curse, unless a *near* and an able *kinsman* had engaged to pay their ransom, and to procure their enlargement. The divine law required perfect and sinless obedience, and justice demanded that their crimes should be expiated by blood, and that the curse, which included death, should be executed to the full. *Without shedding of blood there is no remission. The soul that sinneth shall die.* All these requisitions Jesus Christ answered in his life and at his death. *He magnified the law, and made it honourable, by yielding to it the obedience of a divine person in man's nature. He suffered the pains of the curse through his life of sorrow, and at last had it finally exhausted upon him in his death. He gave*
his

his life a ransom for many: That blood by which he entered once into the holy place, is just the meritorious ground of this redemption. His own blood is the vast price,—the price of boundless and inconceivable value,—which he paid to procure his people's release from thralldom and misery, and their title to everlasting happiness. All the silver and gold that have been dug from, or yet lie secreted in, the bowels of the earth, would have been rejected as base and corruptible things, if proposed as the price of redemption. But the blood of Jesus Christ was adequate to the great purpose for which it was shed, being the blood of Him, *who is, over all, God blessed for ever*. *Ye were redeemed—with the precious blood of Christ*, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

3. That Christ obtained, and still doth obtain and accomplish the redemption of his people with glorious power and efficacy. Though the price of his blood was paid for procuring their legal acquitment from guilt and condemnation, yet their redemption could not have been secured if more had not been done. There were enemies, under whose power they had fallen, as we noticed on the former head. No price was due to these enemies, because they had no legal claim over men. Satan's dominion is usurped, and he could have no right to detain sinners under it, after the law and justice of God were satisfied. Yet such is his enmity against God and man, that he is disposed to use every effort to maintain his infernal dominion over the sons of men, and would certainly have accomplished his purpose, if their Redeemer had not been mighty to overcome him. He is said, not only to dwell in *his palace*, but, like a strong man armed, to keep it,—to defend

defend and retain it to the utmost of his power. He is a most determined and desperate foe. But as Christ made perfect satisfaction for sin, and abolished the law-curse, as the Surety of his people, so he vanquished and disarmed the principalities and powers of darkness, and *made a shew of them openly*,—holding them up to the contempt of God and angels upon his cross, Col. ii. 15. And in the day of conversion, which is *the day of the Mediator's power*, he actually extricates his chosen people from the dominion of sin, and the tyranny of Satan. Hence he is said to *turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked, and redeems them out of the hand of the terrible*. In consequence of the purchase made by his blood, he exerts an efficacy of his grace upon them, breaks down the power of sin and the devil in them, slays the enmity of their hearts, destroys the obstinacy of their wills, and so subdues them to himself. This he does by accompanying the means of grace with divine energy, according to the promise, Psa. cx. 2, 3. *The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*.

4. That Christ alone was able to obtain this redemption for us. He is here represented as having done what none of the priests before him were capable to perform. They could make no atonement for sin, such as an infinite Sovereign could find any real satisfaction in, nor could they at all procure redemption for guilty men. *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come,—neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered*

tered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. This was what no creature, nor all creatures together, could ever effectuate. No man can by any means redeem either himself, or his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever, Psa. xlix. 7, 8. Whether we understand that text of deliverance from the power of natural death, (which seems to be the primary meaning of it,) or of redemption from that estate of complicated misery in which all naturally are, the argument will be found to have sufficient force. For, if no man can redeem his brother from temporal death, or prevent him from falling under its stroke, how much less could he rescue him from the bond of iniquity, the curse of the law, the power of the devil, the wrath of God, and prevent him from being cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death? All mankind would have perished in one common ruin, if divine wisdom and grace had not planned their redemption, and if a divine person had not undertaken to accomplish it. It could not be gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price of thereof: The price of it is above rubies.

Various observations besides these, might be made on this part of the subject.—Christ obtained our redemption freely. As God was under no necessity to propose it, neither was the Son of God under a natural necessity to become the Redeemer. He did this, *not for our sakes, but for his own name's sake*, and because he *loved us freely*.—He obtained it wonderfully. He paid a wonderful price, and exerted wonderful power. He obtained it by dying! Can any thing be more admirable and astonishing, than that

that the life of a Divine Person should be laid down as a ransom for the lives of sinful and rebellious creatures! When on the cross, he was actively appeasing an offended God, and discomfiting the devil, though he appeared to human view to be no more than a helpless and forlorn sufferer! Yet might it not be said, that *the Angel of JEHOVAH did wondrously*, while God, angels, and men, *looked on?*—He obtained our redemption in the most legal and honourable manner. He *raised up the tribes of Jacob, restored the preserved of Israel, and let go God's captives*, to the glory of all divine perfections, and the honour of the divine law. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; for he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable.*—And he obtained this precious redemption completely, and at once. *By one offering he perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* He entered in ONCE into the holy place, having obtained, infallibly, and for ever obtained, eternal redemption for us. When he said, *It is finished*, the whole work of his humbled estate was so completely done, that he could never again be laid under any necessity of returning to his service and sufferings.

It is also to be observed, that he is said to have obtained it for some, in the name of whom the apostle speaks, including himself in the number. *He obtained—redemption FOR US*, says he. It is true, the words *for us* are a supplement: but they are a very proper one. They are supplied from a parallel text below, ver. 24. *Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God FOR US.*

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We may consider for whom redemption was obtained, and may notice the language of appropriation here used.

As to the first of these, we have before had occasion to say, that they are elected persons. They were *chosen in him before the foundation of the world*;—they were *ordained unto eternal life*;—they were *from the beginning chosen unto salvation*;—and they were *appointed to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Eph. i. 4. Acts xiii. 48. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Thess. v. 9. For these Christ engaged in the covenant of grace from eternity, as they were then *given unto him* to be redeemed by him. For these he became incarnate, obeyed, and died. And for these, and none else, he intercedes within the vail, John xvii. 9.—He obtained redemption for all who are effectually called. Those who were elected from eternity are, in due time, *called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord*. Rom. viii. 30. *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called*. They are not only called externally by the word, as all gospel hearers are, but they are powerfully called into union with Christ, as their Redeemer, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. They are enabled to comply with the call, in *receiving Christ Jesus the Lord*.—Thus they for whom this redemption was obtained, are true believers. Their believing is not, indeed, the cause of their being redeemed, but the fruit of it. Like the rest of men they are, by nature, *fearful and unbelieving*. But faith being the appointed mean by which an interest in redemption is enjoyed, all the redeemed *obtain this precious grace*. *By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*. None are made partakers of sa-
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ving faith, on account of any antecedent virtue, or any propensity in them to believe. No. Faith is one of the blessings of redemption, and is bestowed for Christ's sake. And Jesus has his eye upon all who have believed, and who shall believe, as his redeemed ones. *I pray for them also which shall believe on me*, says he, John xvii. 20.—It therefore must follow, that Christ obtained redemption for all those, and for those only, who shall be infallibly redeemed. Shocking is the idea, that any should perish, for whose redemption the Son of God bled and died! His seed were *predestinated* to be called,—*justified,—and glorified*. They are effectually called in time, *to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He gave his life a ransom for them, that they might be *delivered from going down to the pit*, and brought to *be with him where he is, to behold his glory*.

As to the language here used, it is that of saving faith. In conjunction with the interests of other believers, the apostle expresses his own interest in Christ, and in the redemption which he obtained. He *obtained eternal redemption FOR US*. This is a mode of speaking that can be used, with propriety and truth, only by a believing heart. It is language which may fitly be adopted by all true Christians still. It was not written for the apostle's sake, or for those of his believing Hebrew brethren, alone, that redemption was purchased for, and applied to, them; but the same is true of us also, *if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*.—Believers speak in this manner, in consequence of being persuaded, that it was absolutely

absolutely necessary that Christ should purchase redemption for them. They see the necessity of this, when convinced of the sinfulness and misery of their natural estate, and of their own total inability to do any thing for their deliverance from it. None will put any value upon redemption, or lay claim to it, till they see the need of it, and be convinced, that they must perish without it.—Believers get a discovery of redemption, as sufficient, and suitable for them. The sufficiency of it arises from the infinitely valuable price which was paid for it,—even the *blood of God* in our nature, which must be effectual to redeem sinners from the lowest depths of guilt and wretchedness.—They also perceive, that the Redeemer is exhibited to them in the everlasting gospel,—that his redemption is offered to *them* as well as to others. The value and sufficiency of it for them could be of no benefit, if it were not really presented to them for their acceptance, and if they were not fully warranted to accept of it, as perishing sinners, who stand in infinite need of it.—And, in a word, believers speak in this manner about Christ and redemption, in the way of a present receiving and resting upon him, as he is freely offered in the gospel. They believe present interest in redemption, by claiming present interest in it. They renounce all confidence in themselves and their services, and are reconciled to take *redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*

We shall conclude this discourse with a few inferences,

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1. Learn

1. Learn the reality of that state of slavery and wretchedness in which all, without exception, by nature are involved. This is manifest from Christ's being a *Redeemer*. He never would have sustained, nor have acted in, that character, had we not brought ourselves into such a desperate condition, as to stand in absolute need of a *Mighty One to help us*. *Behold, for our iniquities have we sold ourselves, and for our transgressions are we put away from God as a friend and a portion, have fallen under his curse, and are exposed to his wrath for ever.* We are the slaves of many destructive and powerful enemies, against whose tyranny we have neither ability nor inclination to defend ourselves. It is necessary and seasonable exercise for us all, to be viewing our wretched state by nature, as it is supposed and exhibited in the character and work of Christ. We cannot properly look to him as a Redeemer, without considering and confessing that we need to be redeemed. *Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged, Isa. li. 1.*

2. Learn the importance of the work in which Christ was employed, in the state of his humiliation. He was the Redeemer who should *come to Zion*, according to ancient prophecy. When such a Glorious Person was to appear visible upon the earth in man's nature, it must be to accomplish some very weighty design. We are here told, that it was to *obtain eternal redemption* for a lost, but a chosen, people. Never was there a work of greater importance than this, considering how much depended upon it. The glory of all the Divine attributes, and the everlasting happiness of men, were therein interested. Christ

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was engaged in the execution of a plan of redemption which had occupied the thoughts of God, and on which his heart was set, from eternity. To the mystical David he gave testimony, and said, *I have found David,—a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.* Such a testimony was actually given, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Christ was executing a purpose, and fulfilling an engagement, for which no creature was equal; yet JEHOVAH the Father declared his perfect satisfaction with him, when he was only employed in obtaining redemption, because he was absolutely sure that he would not fail nor be discouraged, but that *the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand.*

3. Learn the inestimable value of the blessing of redemption. Redemption will appear to be inestimably valuable, if we consider, only, who the Redeemer is, and what he had to do, in order to obtain it. The Redeemer is *the Mighty God.* The work would have failed in the hand of any person of inferior dignity. This glorious Redeemer must of necessity have his precious blood shed, and must, in this work, exert his omnipotent power. No other price or atonement could relieve or absolve us from the just claim that the Law and Justice of God had upon us, nor could any power less than His,—less than almighty,—deliver us from the dominion of sin, and the tyranny of Satan. *If a man would give all the substance of his house for the redemption of his soul, it would utterly be condemned.* The greatest imaginable sums of silver and gold, when laid in the balance with a blessing so inexpressibly valuable, would

prove lighter than vanity. The redemption which Christ hath obtained, as the *fruit* of his blood shedding, is *better than gold, yea, than fine gold*, Prov. viii. 19. How unwise are those men, who prefer the acquisition of worldly wealth to an interest in Christ, and in the purchased redemption! While they *lade themselves with thick clay*, are they not *wearying themselves for very vanity*? Are they not grasping at a fleeting shadow, and despising that blessedness, which is truly substantial, and which never fades away?

4. Hence see, full ground of assurance that the work of redemption is completed, as to purchase. The entrance of the Redeemer into heaven itself, *by his own blood*, is a proof that he *hath obtained eternal redemption*. He had first to *suffer*, and to *purge our sins by himself*, and then to *enter into his glory*, and *sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*. Now, that he hath done the last is a certain evidence that he hath not left the other undone. Are Christians asked, how they are assured that their redemption, as to purchase, is obtained, and that the full price of it is actually paid? Their answer is, with Job, in another case, *Behold, our witness is in heaven, and our record is on high*. Within the veil stands our Redeemer, presenting his own precious blood before the throne, as the stipulated and all-meritorious ransom for us. *We know that He liveth there*, in a state of glorious and immortal existence, and also in a state of the highest acceptance before God, as our Representative: and this gives us the fullest assurance that *he finished the work which the Father gave him to do on earth*.

5. Hence

5. Hence see, the necessity of faith. Though this grace has no place in the purchase of redemption, yet it belongs to the application of it, and is wrought in the heart of every one to whom that blessing is applied. This is taught us in that question of our Shorter Catechism; "How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? *Ans.* The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling." Here we learn, that there is no union to Christ, and, of consequence, no interest in redemption, without faith. And this is the doctrine of God's holy word, as well as of our subordinate standards. *Christ dwells in the heart by faith*, which is therefore called a *receiving Him*; and he is said to be *set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*. Eph. iii. 17. John i. 12. Rom. iii. 25. Faith is not the reason why any are redeemed; but it is the appointed mean by which they have the benefit of redemption. It belongs to redemption, as the people of God are redeemed from a state of reigning unbelief, and have that *faith*, which is *of the operation of God, given unto them*, or produced in them. Col. ii. 12. Phil. i. 29. In the exercise of this faith, the person receives and rests upon Christ, as *his Redeemer*, appropriating the whole purchased redemption *to himself*. He does, in this case, as a hungry man does with his food, when he eats it, or, as a naked man does with a garment, which is brought to him, when he puts it on. A general belief of the truth of revelation about Christ, and about redemption through his blood, is not the faith of God's elect: else we might suppose that Satan himself is possessed of it.

He *believes* that revelation, and he *trembles* at what he *believes*. Nor have we any reason to imagine, that every sinner, who perishes under the gospel, is properly an infidel. Beyond doubt, many have gone down to the sides of the pit, because they did not receive Christ and salvation by an applying faith, though they credited the general doctrine of Scripture concerning them. A faith without appropriation, like a *faith without works, is dead*. In the exhibition of Christ by the gospel, God addresses himself to every man, saying, *Ho, every one, come*. And in answer to God's particular exhibition and address, *every one* must apply by and for himself, in the exercise of faith. When God, by his Spirit, convinces men of sin, he deals with every one particularly, discovering to him *his sin*, and the misery which accompanies it. And it is not possible that a person can attain to any true and comfortable assurance of deliverance from his deplorable condition, but in the way of dealing *as particularly with the Saviour*, as God deals *with him about his sin*. Hence we find Job, and David, and Mary, and other saints, saying, *My Redeemer*, and *My Saviour*, Job xix. 25. Psal. xix. 14. Luke i. 47. And we find the apostle, who, in our text, speaks the united language of all true believers, also expressing the language of his own faith, by a most particular claim to Christ and his mediation. Gal. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Lastly, Here learn, that believers are infinitely indebted to the death of Christ. He was employed
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in fulfilling all righteousness, in order to the redemption of his people, during the whole course of his life; and, in his death, the price of their redemption was completely paid up, to Law and Justice. *He said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.* The work which the Father gave him to do on earth, was finished. The most important and arduous part of his undertaking was finished. He had only to *yield up his spirit*, and then the meritorious foundation of redemption was actually and immutably laid. *The Son of man came—to give his life a ransom (a redemption-price) for many*, Matth. xx. 28.

Let all be exhorted to take thought about their natural captive-state, and to consider the vast hazard they run, while they continue in it. To be under a load of guilt, under the dominion of sin, under the claim and curse of the law, the power of Satan, and the wrath of an Infinite and Almighty God, is to be wretched indeed! Yet this is the dreadful condition of every man by nature, and it continues to be the alarming situation of every one, who has not embraced the Redeemer. Think what the everlasting consequence must be, if you die in that state! You must be cast into the prison of hell, from which there is no method of escape or enlargement, for ever. Though sinners are prisoners, yet they are at present *prisoners of hope*, and are warranted to *turn to the strong hold*, Zech. ix. 12. But if they persist in despising the entreaties of the gracious Redeemer, and do at last die in their sins, *then a great ransom cannot deliver them!*—Beware of imagining that you can do any thing to obtain redemption for yourselves. Indeed, this word *redemption* conveys such a feeble and

and mean idea into the minds of some, that they seem to think that it means almost nothing; or that redemption is such a small matter, that a few pious thoughts, good wishes, alms-deeds, or some such things, will be sufficient to procure it. But see from this text, by what a costly purchase Jesus Christ had to obtain it for his people. *By his own blood—he obtained eternal redemption for us.* If it was absolutely necessary that he should be *made perfect through sufferings*, and should *pour out his soul unto death*, as the whole tenor of Scripture proves, then in vain do sinners attempt to do any thing to procure their salvation. They are *redeemed only by the precious blood of Christ*.—Persuaded, therefore, of your own natural wretchedness, and of your danger of everlasting perdition, and renouncing all confidence in yourselves, apply to Christ, that he may redeem you from all evil. There is plenteous redemption with him. He obtained it in a most legal manner, and at the greatest expence; and he is ever ready to bestow it. He makes every guilty, enslaved, and perishing sinner welcome, saying, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*.—Let those who have embraced the Redeemer, and have an actual saving interest in redemption, be concerned to praise the Lord, according to the great goodness which he hath shewed unto them. *Let the redeemed of the Lord say, that his mercy endureth for ever.* Bless the Lord for the contrivance, the purchase, and the application of redemption. Walk as those who are redeemed from this present evil world. *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Trust in a Faithful and Mighty Redeemer, for the on-
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ing of the work of redemption within you by his Holy Spirit, and for bringing you at last into the Most Holy Place, into which he entered by his own blood; where you shall sing in concert with all your redeemed brethren, saying, *Thou art worthy of endless glory, and honour, and praise; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.*

S E R M O N XV.

A SUITABLE PRAYER FOR DISEASED SOULS.

PSALM xli. 4.

—*LORD—beal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.*

OUR chief care should be about our souls. We will be losers beyond repair, if we lose them. *What shall it profit a man, though he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* There is nothing that we are in more hazard of losing, considering that an evil and dangerous disease naturally cleaves to them, and that we are unconcerned and even backward to have it removed. But if this disease be not taken away, our souls will most certainly be lost,—and be lost for ever! It is, therefore, our duty and our interest to be thoughtful about this; and, as the distemper bids defiance to all our power,

power, we should imitate the example of the Psalmist, and apply for relief at the hand of that merciful God, who hath promised to *send health and cure*.

This psalm appears to have been composed by David, when he was under bodily distress. He sets forth the bad treatment that he met with from his enemies, who rejoiced over him, and insulted him, in the time of trouble. *An evil disease, said they, cleaveth fast unto him; and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.* The deceitful and cruel usage which David met with from his enemies, enhanced to him the value of the sympathy and kindness of his friends. And, accordingly, he begins the psalm, by setting forth the blessedness of the person, who is disposed to inquire about, and to shew concern for, the miseries of his fellow creatures. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*

Various articles of that person's blessedness are next mentioned. *The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, as long as it shall be for his good; and he shall be blessed upon the earth.* As his care and concern for the poor, especially for the poor among God's people, is an evidence of true religion, so he shall not only be blessed in heaven, but also *on the earth*, with such a competency of good things, as God reckons proper for him. And although his good deeds may procure him many enemies, yet the Lord will not deliver him unto their will. He cannot expect to be free from bodily trouble himself, considering that *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*, and that *the afflictions of the righteous are many*; but he shall have God's gracious presence to support and strengthen him under all his distresses,

distresses, to sweeten them to him, and to preserve him from fainting under them. *The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

In the 4th verse we have the Psalmist putting up a prayer on his own behalf. It is a repetition of what had frequently been his request on former occasions. *I said, LORD, be merciful unto me.* Mercy is to be our constant plea. We daily stand in need of it. It is a never-failing argument, and we cannot use it too often. *I said* formerly, and *I say* still, *LORD, be merciful to me.* Our text informs us what *mercy* the Psalmist was more especially seeking at this time. It was *healing mercy* to his soul. *LORD, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.*

Many, when brought low by bodily distress, entertain no proper thought about the welfare of their souls. Their great, their very anxious desire is to have their outward trouble removed. But the true Christian, when in suitable exercise, will feel his soul diseases to be his greatest burden. The Psalmist, though under outward affliction, is chiefly concerned about the health of his soul. It was an evidence that his distress was sanctified, when it made him mindful of this. *Heal my soul.* The disease of which he complains most heavily, is taken notice of in the last clause, *for I have sinned against thee.* The sin of his soul was that which principally affected him. It does not appear, in this place, that he had his eye on any particular sin, but upon his sin in general. On his bed of languishing he reflected upon it. He perceived that his outward trouble sprang from a spiritual disease within him, and that otherwise he would not have been liable to any distress. And
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the cure of this he asks from an infallible hand. LORD, *heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.*

All of us have reason for the same complaint, and, therefore, we have need to use the same prayer. Accordingly, the text teacheth us this truth, That our souls being diseased by sin, we are to seek the healing of them from the Lord.—We may

- I. Speak of the disease;
- II. Of the Lord's healing the soul of this disease;
- III. Point out the grounds of encouragement to pray for the healing of our souls; and then add a few inferences for the improvement of the subject.—We are,

I. To speak of the disease of the soul, the removal of which is here prayed for. It is *sin*. *I*, says David, *have sinned against thee.*

1. This is a spiritual disease. Hence, according to the text, it especially affects the souls of men. The soul, being a spiritual substance, no material corruption can seize upon it. But sin is a disease, in a moral or spiritual sense. It cannot be seen or felt outwardly, except by its effects. All the distresses upon mens persons, and all the calamities that overspread the world in general, are the visible effects of sin. Jer. iv. 18. *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee*, said the prophet to a sinful nation. But sin itself is an inward and spiritual distemper, though it is discovered by many visible marks and symptoms. And its being so, renders it the more dreadful and dangerous. An internal wound is more hazardous than an outward bruise,

bruise, by reason of the difficulty of coming at the proper knowledge of the former, and, consequently, of applying a proper remedy. The disease of sin cannot be removed by any human or angelic art. It is so deeply rooted in a man's soul, that none but a Divine Physician can have the skill and power to eradicate it.

2. It is an old disease. It is not a malady of that kind that may seize us, or not. It is not a disease newly contracted, or with which we were overtaken only yesterday, or very lately. It is as old as ourselves. It came into the world with us. Psal. li. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* It has been long in the world, even since the covenant of works was broken in paradise, and it has never been out of it. Each of us was born with it. No sooner are we in the world, than we are diseased. Like the wretched infant mentioned in Ezek. xvi. *in the day that we are born, we are, in a moral sense, filthy and polluted.*

Pelagians and Socinians would, indeed, hold us to be free of this disease at our birth. Though we become sinners, say they, by imitating others before us, as soon as we are capable of it, yet we are not generated or brought forth in sin. But the word of the living God declares the reverse of this, when it proposes that question, Job xiv. 4. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.* There we find purity or innocence denied to belong to any, without exception, who come into the world by ordinary generation. And our Lord, when conversing with Nicodemus about the necessity of regeneration, tells him, John iii. 6. *That which is born of*

the flesh, is flesh. Now, if we take this in connection with what goes before it, it will appear that we are born with this disease. It is said in the preceding verse, *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* There the necessity of regeneration implies the existence of natural corruption: and immediately it is added, *that which is born of the flesh, is flesh*; which plainly shews, that the natural corruption, which is implied in the foregoing verse, is conveyed unto us by our natural generation, or, that we partake of that corruption as soon as we partake of *flesh*. Of consequence, as soon as we are born, we need to be *born again*, because we are corrupt at our first birth. This disease is, therefore, an old one, as it is born with us; and it still cleaves, in its full vigour, to all who have never applied to the Lord to be healed.

3. It is a common and universal disease. It is the disease of *mankind*. Rom. iii. 23. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* We have already seen, that all men are born corrupt, or have original sin inherent. But they are also sinful, in respect of the guilt of Adam's first sin. Rom. v. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*; or, *in whom all have sinned*, as some have read it. And in the 19th verse of that chapter, it is said, *By one man's disobedience many were made sinners*; not a great number only, exclusive of the rest, but *the many* of human kind, that is, the whole of them, as in verse 18th, *By the offence of one judgment came upon ALL MEN to condemnation.* The first sin is theirs by imputation. It is adjudged as theirs, in consequence of its being committed by Adam,

Adam, as their representative. He acted, not in his own name only, but also in that of all his posterity. He was both our natural root, and our federal head. Therefore, as he brake covenant with God, his sin became ours in the eye of the law, and we are justly charged with it. Our first father *hath eaten the four grapes*, and we his children have our teeth set on edge.

And as soon as we are capable of it, we are all guilty of actual sin, in our own persons. Psal. lvi. 3. *The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born.* What a multitude of sinful thoughts, words, and actions, are we all chargeable with? *Innumerable evils testify against us, and our iniquities are more than the hairs upon our heads.* Who can say, *I have not sinned, neither is there iniquity in my hands?*

This disease has not only spread over all mankind, but it has also infected the whole man. The Psalmist, indeed, speaks of it as the disease of *his soul*, because it has its seat there. Yet it extends its malign influence over both soul and body. Every faculty of the soul is infected with it. The understanding, which is to the soul what the eyes are to the body, is so dimmed and darkened, as to be unable to *discern the things of the Spirit of God*. The will, which formerly lay straight with the will of God, is crooked, perverse, and obstinate. The affections are dead to God and to divine things, and alive to vain, carnal, and sinful objects. The conscience is evil, stupid, and *seared as with a hot iron*. When the soul is thus diseased, it is impossible that the body should remain sound. The members of it are used as the *instruments of unrighteousness unto sin*.

The tongue, for example, is employed in uttering much falsehood, blasphemy, perverseness, and many great swelling words of vanity. The eyes, unless a covenant be made with them to the contrary, are looking upon vain or forbidden objects. The hands are busy in executing what is conceived and formed in the corrupt heart. But a more striking account of human nature, under the prevalence of this disease, you cannot have, than that which you find in Rom. iii. 13,—18. *There is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

4. This is a disease for which we have ourselves to blame. Eccl. vii. 29. *God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.* God did not make man diseased, but man hath made himself so. He was at first created after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He was carved like a fair palace, though he is now become like a sepulchre, full of dead mens bones, and of all uncleanness. And to whom is the awful change to be attributed, but unto himself? *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself,* Hos. xiii. 9.

It is true, that God permitted this change to take place; but he did not,—he could not, command it, persuade to it, or approve of it. He did not interpose to prevent it, but purposed to order it to his own glory. He gave man at first a righteous and holy nature, and made him able to obey the law fully.

fully. At the same time, he left free the human will; and man, being left to the freedom of his own will, fell from the estate wherein he was created, by sinning against God. His fall did not proceed from any fatal necessity that he was laid under to do so. That he should continue in a state of innocence, and persist in a course of holy obedience, was what God commanded and encouraged him unto: but to sin was strictly prohibited, and an awful threatening was pronounced, in order to guard him against it. So that, of his own free will, he chose to rebel rather than to obey, and, consequently, he chose death rather than life.

Some persons may still say, "How have I to blame myself for my disease, seeing I derive it at first from Adam, and it is conveyed from one generation to another?" This has been partly answered already. He was our public head and representative, and, therefore, what he did, in that capacity, was our deed, or, it is accounted ours, as really and justly as if we had done it in our own persons. "But who gave Adam a right to represent me in the covenant of works? He could not do so with justice and propriety, but by my consent." Allowing this to be true, we answer, that he had *your consent*, when he gave *his own*. In his upright and holy state, it was impossible that he should not agree to whatever God proposed. And, as we were all considered as in him at his fall, so also before it,—the moment that the covenant was proposed. In him we were viewed to be as upright and holy as he was, previous to his apostasy from God, and so equally submissive and obedient to God's will. And,

of consequence, when he consented, we did so in him.

That his posterity fondly approve of what he did, in sinning against God, appears from their disposition to follow his example. Do we not, in our natural estate, add to our disease? *We walk according to the course of this world, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and thus evidence ourselves to be the children of wrath, even as others.* So that we have ourselves wholly to blame for our disease. We can lay it at no door but our own, each of us in particular, saying with David, *I have sinned against thee.*

5. This is a very loathsome disease. We have greater reason to complain of it than the Psalmist had of any bodily distemper that he might be labouring under, when he uttered these words in Psa. xxxviii. 5, 6. *My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness. My loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh.* It is set forth under figures of the most disagreeable and nauseous disorders. Isa. i. 5, 6. *The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: They have not been closed, neither bound up, nor mollified with ointment.* We know that a sore, which hath been allowed to fester and putrify, without any care being used to heal it, is a nauseous and abominable thing. But infinitely more loathsome is this woful disease of the soul.

It is so vile in God's sight, that he observes it with the greatest abhorrence. Hab. i. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.*

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Not as if God did not see or know of sin wherever it takes place; for he *sets mens iniquities before him, and their secret sins in the light of his countenance*; but he beholds it as an object most detestable in his sight. It is *that abominable thing which he hates*. It is this that renders men the objects of his hatred and indignation. Hence he said to a sinning people, *I will cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you*. It makes the most solemn duties, that the sinner may profess to be engaged in, hateful and abominable to God. *I hate, I despise*, says the Lord, *your feast days; I will not smell in your solemn assemblies*. In short, there is nothing hateful in God's sight, but this disease; and whatever he detests and abhors, it is on account thereof.

When a person obtains a proper discovery of it himself, he also perceives it to be vile. He beholds himself as an hospital, full of the most inveterate and intolerable maladies. He is *altogether become filthy*. It fills him with surprise, that he did not discover himself to be such a person before. He cannot fully conceive or express how base and vile he is. *How abominable and filthy is man that drinketh in iniquity like water?* Here are not only corrupted and putrifying sores, but corruption itself. How justly may we say, with our mouths on the dust, like the leper, *Unclean, unclean!*

6. It is an increasing disease. There are some maladies that our bodies are liable to, which gradually subside of themselves: but there are others, which, if a cure be not judiciously and speedily applied, do rapidly spread, and become more and more malign and fatal. Of this last kind is the spiritual

tual disease of sin. The longer that it remains without a cure, the more dreadful it grows. Corruption gathers more strength, and becomes more lively, and less ashamed. The sinner rushes on from one species of wickedness to another. 2 Tim. iii. 13. *Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.* They are not merely worse than *they were*; but they shall become worse than *they now are*. And it is said, Jer. ix. 3. *They proceed from evil to evil.* One act of wickedness leads them on to another; and when they commit one sin, they add to it the guilt of a second, a third, and so on.

And it is remarkable, that the more this disease spreads, the more insensible is the person under it. Progress in sin stupifies the conscience, and hardens the heart. So much is taught in that advice given to Christians, Heb. iii. 13. *Exhort one another daily while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Experience and observation may teach us the same. The more that we accustom ourselves to the neglect of any duty, or to the commission of any sin, the less we think of it. And when it becomes habitual to neglect any one duty, or to practise any one sin, we think we may do so as to other duties and sins. All this is an evidence of the growing power of corruption within us. It is the *lust, which conceiveth* in the heart, that *bringeth forth sin* outwardly; and *sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*.—This leads us to observe,

7. In a word, That it is a mortal,—a deadly disease. In itself it is properly the death of the soul. Hence sinners are said to be *dead in trespasses and sins*. It is a moral death, the soul being dead to God and

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to holiness, and equally destitute of spiritual life, as a carcase is of natural life. But it will also issue, if not removed, in eternal death. Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death*; which is to be understood of death eternal, as opposed to the eternal life promised through Jesus Christ our Lord in the last part of that verse.

Such is the fearful tendency and final issue of this disease. It will not prevail to the annihilation of the soul, but to the everlasting destruction both of soul and body. It is not, therefore, a slight distemper, that men may be afflicted with, and yet be careless about it, as if no bad consequences would follow. But it is a malignant, and a desperate malady, for any thing that sinners themselves are able to do. It is appointed and designed, by the irreversible and just sentence of JEHOVAH, to be the sinner's death, if he be not delivered from it in time. *The soul that sinneth it shall die.* There is nothing that God is more immovably determined upon than this; for he could not alter it consistently with his nature and perfections. And, therefore, all who finally reject the great Physician of souls, shall die eternally of that very disease, which at first "brought death into the world, and all our woe."—But we proceed,

II. To speak of the Lord's healing the soul of this disease. Though it be incurable, and, consequently, mortal, for any thing that we can do; yet the Lord is able and willing to remove it, and to preserve alive the soul. *Heal my soul*, says David.—As to the Lord's work of healing a diseased soul, we observe,

I. That he makes the person sensible of his disease, and that he may despair of a cure at every hand

hand but God's. He discovers the soul-ruining malady that cleaves to the sinner, so that the sinner beholds it to be very dangerous and fatal, although it sat lightly upon him, when his conscience was asleep. Now is he constrained to say, *Woe is me for my hurt, my wound is grievous.* Sinners are naturally like men, under some sorts of fevers or other very malignant disorders, that are totally insensible of the state they are in, and attempt to speak and act, as if nothing ailed them. But, when the Lord proceeds to heal a soul, he opens up the truth and the nature of the disease, so that conscience is alarmed on account of it. The man finds that he is not chargeable with some grosser acts of iniquity only, but that the whole of his conduct is sinful, and that his disease is rooted in his very nature,—that *even his mind and conscience is defiled* thereby. This, in the case of some persons, has occasioned very great agony of mind, and that sometimes of considerable duration, before the Lord brought them to any comfortable view of the remedy. *There was no soundness in their flesh, because of his anger, nor any rest in their bones, because of their sin.*

And as it is natural for a man, when he feels himself sick, to apply some where for relief; so the diseased sinner, being so far sensible of his situation, applies for ease to his conscience from some quarter. It is usual at first, that he is greatly mistaken about the means of spiritual health, and cure. He knows not how, or from whence, these can come. He tries to be his own physician. He attempts to remove his disorder, by some feeble endeavours to conform to the law, as a covenant. He goes about to *establish his own righteousness*,—to heal his conscience by remedies

medies of his own devising. But the Lord brings him to see, that the more he attempts, in this way, to remove his malady, the more it increases. He is only administering strength to it, in thus endeavouring the cure of it. Though he try this course, and others, again and again, yet his disease remains. He must have some physician,—some cure without himself, otherwise he cannot get the better of it. *Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains.* He is brought to a desperate strait, and knows not what to do. *What must I do to be saved?* At last, he finds no method practicable and safe, but that of applying to the free and sovereign mercy of God in Christ, saying, *LORD, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.*

2. The Lord heals souls by the blood of Christ. This is the only effectual medicine. 1 John i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* This, as it were, taps the root of the disorder, so that ever after it is declining in the soul. Christ, by his blood, made complete atonement for sin. Hence he is said to be *the propitiation for our sins.* His blood was fully propitiatory, because of the dignity of his person; and it was propitiatory for our sin, because it was really shed for it, in our law-room and stead. When this precious blood is accounted unto a person, the guilt of his sin is thereby removed. It can no more be charged against him, than if he had never been chargeable with it, or had satisfied for it in his own person: because all that Christ did and endured, was for those, who, in due time, come to have his blood applied unto them. Thus it is said, Isa. liii. 5. *He was wounded for our transgressions,*

sions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace (or, the punishment procuring our peace) was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.

It is on account of the blood of Christ that God pardons sin. By it he received full satisfaction for all the injuries done to his righteous and holy law. Nothing can stand now in the way of his forgiving all the iniquities of the sinner, and blotting them out of his sight. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. Eph. i. 7. And this blood is the only effectual salve for a wounded conscience. It alone will have a salutary and lasting effect. Some balsam that the legal-hearted sinner applies to his conscience, may appear for a time to heal it; but the disease breaks out afterwards, and is worse than ever. All cures that are attempted, in this case, are false, except that which is effected by the blood of Jesus. Other cures may cover the disorder from our eyes, but they cannot remove it from us, nor hide it out of God's sight. He beholds every person, who is a stranger to Christ, as *not washed from his filthiness. Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God. How canst thou say, I am not polluted?* Jer ii. 22, 23.

But the moment that the blood of Christ is apprehended by the sinner, he is perfectly whole, in respect of his state before God. His cure, with reference thereto, can never be more perfect than it is in the day of believing. He is then *justified from all things*. God is *pacified toward him for all that he hath done*, and he cannot again come into condemnation.

3: God heals the soul by making a supernatural and saving change upon it. It is not only healed as to its state, but as to its frame and disposition. The healing of it is no less than a *new-making* of it, as to its moral nature. When David got a view of his diseased case, both by nature and practice, he prayed to be healed in this manner, Psa. li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Sin hath polluted the soul, and put it into a state of the greatest confusion and disorder. It may be compared to a machine, that hath long lain aside from use, whose wheels and other parts are so covered with rust, and in such a complete state of disorder, that it cannot answer its original purpose, until it be polished, and put in proper order again. Wofully is the soul defiled, weakened, and put out of order by this disease, as already said. In healing it, therefore, much must be done upon it. As the guilt of sin is removed by an act of pardoning mercy, which is passed in the Court of heaven without the soul, so there is a work of grace which must be begun within it. It must be *renewed* and *created* again. *He which sits upon the throne saith, Behold, I make all things new. A new heart will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you.* It must partake of *the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

By this change the reigning power of the disease is broken, and the principles of spiritual health are implanted in the soul. *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Then all the faculties of the soul are, in a good measure restored to their original use. *He restoreth my soul,* saith David, *he leadeth me in the*
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paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The darkness that formerly filled the understanding is dispelled, and *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God* shines into it. The rebellion of the will is overcome, and it is inclined unto that which good, and backward to that which is evil. The affections are disposed to flow out toward God and divine things. The conscience is cleansed, and brought to enjoy a sweet and pleasant rest upon Christ. And then, the members of the body are active in the service of God. In short, *the very God of peace sanctifies the person wholly, in spirit, and soul, and body.* He is made a new man, in comparison of what he was before. Eph. iv. 24. *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, and all things are become new.*

4. That the Lord heals a diseased soul by means of his word and Spirit. The word is the outward mean, which is made effectual by the Spirit of God. Psa. cvii. 20. *He sent his word, and healed them.* By the word of the law, he discovers the disease to the sinner; and, by the word of the gospel, he discovers the remedy which he hath provided for the cure of it. And it is by the word that he usually intimates that he *hath forgiven all a man's iniquities, and healed all his diseases.* How medicinal and pleasant is it to a soul that has been distressed by desponding fears and perplexities, when the Lord intimates that he hath healed it! Sometimes he speaks to a person in such a kind declaration as that in Ezek. xvi. 63. *I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* Thus, when his
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people are *broken in their hearts*, and *grieved in their minds*, he binds up their painful wounds, and heals them by *good words*, and *comfortable words*. And nothing in this world can equal the happiness and joy of that soul whom the Lord brings to receive the intimation of pardon, without entertaining any doubt about the certainty of it at the time, however much he may afterwards sink into unbelieving fears. He is *made to hear the voice of joy and gladness*, and his *broken bones do rejoice*.

In the future part of the Christian's life, when he has to complain of the remains of his disease still hanging about him, as David had to do at this time, a promise of healing from the Lord proves to be present relief to him. The person is satisfied that it shall be as the Lord hath said. Such a promise as that, Isa. lvii. 18. *I have seen his ways, and will heal him*, dispels all the fears of the soul, and restores it to peace. When the Lord *speaks the word*, immediately his *servant is healed*. The word brought home by the power of the Spirit upon the heart, so as to be laid hold upon and credited by a person, is like the wine and oil, which the good Samaritan poured into the wounds of the man who fell among thieves. It is both medicinal and refreshing. Christ, taken up in the promise, is both the Physician and the medicine; and the faith of this fills the soul with joy and peace. The person, at such a time, upbraids himself, like David, because of his groundless and unreasonable fears. Psa. xlii. 11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

5. The Lord is ever present to carry on the work of healing diseased souls, and he will at last complete it. Phil. i. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* He doth not leave his work unfinished. The disease, however inveterate, doth not difficult him, nor surpass his skill and power. He enables the soul, when guilty of sin, to apply to the same blood that it at first apprehended. And every believing view of Jesus is healing in its nature. Christ is the great antitype of the brazen serpent, and every right look of him draws healing virtue from him. Where can a Christian, whose conscience is wounded by repeated acts of sin, find rest and peace; but upon that blood and righteousness, which his faith at first took up with? This is still sustained before God in the person's behalf; God is still at peace with him on that ground; and the person himself can find no solid rest but there.

There are renewed communications of the grace of Christ made to his people, for the purpose of lessening their disease, and promoting the health of their souls. The fulness of Christ is dispensed according to their need. *Out of his fulness they receive, and grace for grace.* This proves weakening to the remains of sin within them, and their spiritual health is strengthened and confirmed; or, in other words, they are "enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness." They increase in spiritual strength and stature,—going *from strength to strength* unwearied. The Lord makes all his ordinances and providences towards them conducive to this end. These are means in his hand of leading his

his people to depend constantly upon himself, as their Physician. They are taught to improve his blood daily, for taking away the guilt of their sin, and his grace, for subduing sin more and more in them.

As the Lord carries on the work of healing gradually, so he will make it perfect at last. There is a perfect day coming, as to all who are His patients. *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Their disease is still losing strength, and it will be entirely removed at that day. What day? The day of Jesus Christ. *He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*,—the day of his coming to the soul at death, and the day of his coming to take his people, both soul and body, home to glory. Then there will not be the least vestige of this disease remaining. It shall not leave so much as a scar behind. For, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him.*—We proceed,

III. To point out the grounds of encouragement which are given unto us to pray for the Lord's healing our souls. We shall only mention a few things here, and these with brevity.

1. It is encouraging to pray for this, that the Lord is merciful, and delighteth in mercy. This was the Psalmist's plea in the present case. *I said, Lord, be merciful to me : heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.* Are we miserable, by reason of this disease? Misery is the proper object of mercy. God's mercy hath obtained a vent to the honour of his justice and purity; and, therefore he can extend the riches of his mercy toward us through Christ Jesus, in a perfect consistency with himself. His promise is, *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and ini-*

guities will I remember no more. This woful disease, which is both our crime and our punishment, is no bar in the way of his *shewing his mercy*, and *granting his salvation* to us, because he hath got complete satisfaction for it in the obedience and death of Christ. This is most animating encouragement to each of us to say, as did the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*

2. It is encouraging to pray for the Lord's healing our souls, that Jesus Christ was commissioned and sent forth for this very end. He is appointed by the Father to be the Physician, as well as the Leader and Commander of the people. Luke iv. 18. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to recover sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised.* It is by no usurped power that Christ sets forth himself as the Physician of great value. He was legally commissioned by him who said unto him, *Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* He was called of God, as was Aaron. God saw that the whole race of Adam would have died eternally of this disease, if a remedy had not been provided. He, therefore, sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. His blood and grace are the only effectual medicine, and he himself is the Physician to apply it to the souls of men. He is sent to heal the broken hearted. This affords encouragement to pray for being healed, because what God hath designed to accomplish by Christ, cannot but be accomplished.

3. Let us consider, that Christ is infinitely able for this work. Often hath a physician attempted a cure, which

which he could not perform. The disease bade defiance to all his prescriptions. But no disease, not even this malignant soul-disease, can exceed the skill and power of *Him who is able to save to the uttermost*. We read of a woman, who was oppressed with a severe disorder, and *had spent all her living upon physicians, without being bettered*. But a *touch of the hem of Christ's garment* made her quite well. As he had power on earth to remove the most obstinate bodily distempers, so he is able to heal every spiritual disease. His blood is truly *precious blood*, and his grace is efficacious grace. There is nothing *too hard* for him.

Consider, that his ability has been, in innumerable instances, proved. All the redeemed about the throne were oppressed with this disease. In some of them it had arrived at a greater degree of inveteracy, than, perhaps, in any of you. Now they are made perfectly whole. They have no more sorrow, nor pain. The Apostle Paul does not now complain of the *body of this death*. He, and all his triumphing brethren, are so many instances of Christ's power over this dreadful malady. When we, therefore, pray for being healed, we are not praying for that which is not to be obtained, but for that which Christ hath bestowed upon many, and which he is as able as ever to bestow upon us.

4. Christ is willing to heal us. He invites us to apply unto him, and complains when we *will not come unto him, that we may have life*. He evidenced his willingness to this work, by cheerfully engaging in it from eternity, and by assuming, in time, the *body which was prepared for him*, by the decree and appointment of God the Father, and by the marvelous

lous power of the Holy Ghost. *He said, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God.* And, in the gospel, he is *lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness*, that we may look to him by faith, and be healed.

He readily attends to every petition for his assistance. Does any sinner apply to him for being healed? And does he not say, as to the Centurion who applied on his servant's behalf, *I will come, and heal him?* Yea, is he not offering himself as a physician to us, saying, *Wilt thou be made whole?* Can we doubt his willingness, when we consider the vast expence he hath been at to obtain our health and cure? He hath obtained this at the expence of his life. He died, that this disease might not prove to be our death for ever. And he assures us, that by applying in the manner which he hath appointed, we shall not meet with a denial of the remedy.

A few inferences shall conclude this discourse.

1. Hence see, the misery of man's natural state. He is infected with a disease, which is hateful in its nature, and terrible in its consequences. This is a special part of his misery. Though men will not believe it, yet it is true, that to be a sinner is to be miserable, even although his sin did not subject him to the execution of God's wrath and curse. A person under the guilt and pollution of sin, is wretched, though he were to meet with no evil in this world, and though there were no torment in hell hereafter.

2. Hence see, that the peace and ease of mind, which men in their natural estate, seem to enjoy, is false and deceitful. They are *wholly at ease and quiet. They are not in trouble as other men: neither*

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are they plagued like other men. If their bodies be whole and sound, they know of no disease with which they are infected, or of which they have to complain. But they ought to reflect, that sin is a malady of the most fatal and dangerous kind. It preys upon them, and will prove their ruin at last. *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Their carelessness and insensibility, are symptoms that their case is the more dangerous, and that, as we usually speak, their disease hath far gone on. When a person labouring under certain bodily complaints is altogether insensible of pain, it is considered as an evidence that he is brought very low by his disorder. The more secure and insensible that a sinner is, he is in the greater danger of dying in that state. *When they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.*

3. Hence see, a reason why the Lord's people stand in need of his help daily. They are not altogether delivered from this disease. Though they are saved from the guilt of sin, and from its reigning power in the soul; yet while they are here, there are still some remains of it in them. *The flesh lusteth and warreth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* They find a law in their members, warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin, which is in their members. And, therefore, each of them finds occasion to exclaim, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* They are daily committing such transgressions, as are dishonourable to God, and distressing to their own consciences. These are evidences that the cure of their souls is not complete. They, therefore, stand always

ways in need of the Physician's assistance to carry on his own work of healing them. Accordingly the Psalmist, who formerly had experience of the Lord's healing work, is as earnest about it as ever. *Lord, heal my soul.*

4. Hence see, the safest and surest method to take with all our spiritual diseases. It is to spread them out before the Lord, and to pray for help from him. In vain do we look for relief from any other quarter. Our duties are, in every respect, insufficient. We are not to expect it from an absolute God. Although mercy is a perfection of the divine nature, yet it could not, in the present case, be shewn to men, because justice had a claim upon them. This claim must have been answered, before mercy could be extended to diseased sinners. It is from God in Christ that we are to look for healing to our souls. *Mercy and truth are met together in Christ; and righteousness and peace have embraced each other.* This affords the highest encouragement to seek healing mercy from him, as he not only can, but hath promised to bestow it in this way. *I said, Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul.*

5. This subject may be improved in an use of trial and examination. It is both your duty and your interest to try, whether you have experience of being healed of your soul-disease. We are not true Christians, nor are we able to serve God acceptably in any duty, whether civil or religious, if we be not thus healed.—If you be healed, or, if the cure be begun in you, you have seen and felt yourselves diseased by sin. You have got a discovery of the sin of your natures and practices, and have been convinced that you were totally unable to free yourselves

selves from it.—If you be healed, then love drew you to the Physician. His love conquered all your enmity against him, and your aversion to submit to his cure. *We love him*, says an apostle, *because he first loved us*. *I drew them*, says a gracious God, *with cords of a man, and with bands of love*.—If you be healed, then you have an increasing esteem of the glorious Physician, and are still trusting all that concerneth your souls in his hand.—You will be employed in commending him to others, as you have opportunity. *Come, all ye that fear God*, said David, *and I will tell what he hath done for my soul*.—You will commend the ways of the Lord to others, both by your advice and by your example. Thus will you carry about with you evidence that you are his. Your conversation and behaviour will commend Christ wherever you go. It is said of that man, whom our Lord delivered from the devils, after they had long possession of him, that he *went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him*. And the impotent man, of whom you read, John, chap. v. as soon as he learned to whom he was indebted for his cure, *went and told that it was Jesus who had made him whole*.—In a word, if the Lord hath healed you, you will be endeavouring to give him all the praise of it,—to thank him for it with a grateful heart. See how David shuts up this psalm; *Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen*. And, in Psal. ciii, near the beginning, he charges *his soul*, and *all that is within him* to *bless the LORD, who forgiveth all thine iniquities*, says he, *and who healeth all thy diseases*.

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You who are the Lord's people have all had experience of his healing mercy and power; and, therefore, we exhort you to study the exercise of praise and thanksgiving. To acknowledge his distinguishing goodness to you, with thankful hearts, is all the return you can make to him for it. When David's *broken bones* were made to rejoice, he prayed to be enabled to praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to him. Psal. li. 15. *O LORD, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* When the Lord delivered him from blood-guiltiness, he declared that *his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness.*

Be exhorted to employ him still, as *THE LORD YOUR HEALER.* When conscience is, at any time, wounded by sin, he alone can close the wound, and bind it up. *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.* You can no more carry on the work of healing yourselves, than you could begin it. And it is very dishonourable to him, if you attempt any thing of this kind. He is wanting further employment from you, and as he alone is able for this work, he desires to have it left in his hand. By faith, study an improvement of his healing blood daily. You will find the same virtue and efficacy in it as at first. It is a medicine that can never lessen in its value, nor lose any of its power.

Such as are strangers to this glorious Physician, and who have never applied to him to be healed, we would exhort to take thought about the state of their souls now, before it be too late. Consider, Sirs, that if your disease be not removed in time, it will infallibly be your ruin. It will *lie down with you in the dust.* It will accompany you to hell, and there,

there, through eternity, it will be an increasing and incurable disease. But consider, that the Physician is now within your reach. He comes, in the gospel-dispensation, offering relief to helpless sinners. He is saying to every one of you, *What wouldst thou that I should do unto thee?* In the church stands the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. Christ is that tree of life. And you have as good access to him, and warrant to apply to him, as ever any had. Do not say, "My case is desperate; my disease is too far gone on, to think of getting it cured." No; there is nothing too hard for the Lord. Christ did not find a disorder in the world, when he was in it, that could baffle his skill, or his power. He *healed all manner of diseases among the people*. And he is able to remove every spiritual malady.—"But," may you say, "I have nothing to present before him, to influence him to heal me. I have no price to give for a cure." Consider and believe, that he heals souls freely, and for nothing on their part. *He that hath no money,* says he, *let him come*. He designs to glorify his free grace in healing mens souls. Make application to him for yourselves. Try to pray for healing. He is within the reach of faith's cry. Say to him, under a sense of your desperate need, *O Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee*. He loves to be entreated by helpless sinners, and he will be prevailed with to do as he hath said. So will you have to sing, as David, to the praise of divine grace, *O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me*, Psal. xxx. 2.



.CORRIGENDUM.

Page 395, at the top, *instead of* " Universal salvation, though
" a doctrine which has," &c. *read* " The contrary doc-
" trine, which has been warmly espoused," &c.

CORRIGENDUM

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